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Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India

William Gould



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Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India

William Gould explores what is arguably one of the most important and controversial themes in twentieth-century Indian history and politics: the nature of Hindu nationalism as an ideology and political language. Rather than concentrating on the main institutions of the Hindu right in India as other studies have done, the author uses a variety of historical sources to analyse how Hindu nationalism affected the supposedly secularist Congress in the key state of Uttar Pradesh. In this way, the author offers an alternative assessment of how these languages and ideologies transformed the relationship between Congress and north Indian Muslims. The book makes a major contribution to historical analyses of the last two critical decades before Partition and Independence in 1947, which will be of value to scholars interested in historical and contemporary Hindu nationalism, and to students researching the final stages of colonial power in India.

WILLIAM GOULD is a Lecturer in the Department of History at the University of Leeds.

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University of Leeds



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For Olivia and my parents

Contents

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Glossary

acchutuddhar	uplift of 'untouchables'
ahimsa	non-violence
Ahir	Hindu agricultural caste associated with cattle-rearing; see also Yadav
akhara	gymnasium
anjuman	an organisation
arti	ceremony or form of worship
Arya Samaj	Arya Society – Hindu reform organisation
'Aryavarta'	land of the 'Aryans'
badmash	hooligan, villain
Bakr-Id	Islamic festival involving sacrifice
'Bande Mataram'	Bengali hymn, adopted as a national song
Bania	trader, moneylender
Barawafat	Islamic festival
bhadralok	gentlefolk. Refers mostly to high-caste groups in Bengal
bhang	drug, often prepared in drinks and sweets
Bhagavad Gita	'The Song of God': poem incorporated into the *Mahabharata*
bhakti	Hindu devotionalism
Bharat	India
Bhuinhar	landholding caste
brahmacharya	religious student, values of a religious student
charkha	spinning wheel
Chamar	low caste, often associated with leather work and tanning
Chehlum	Islamic festival
dal	party, corps
Dalit	'untouchable' caste group
darshan	worship
dharma	religious duty

dhobi	washerman
Diwali	Hindu festival of light
Dom	'untouchable' caste group
durbar	royal or imperial audience
ganja	cannabis
ghat	a flight of steps, landing place or bank next to a river
goonda	hooligan, thug, lout
Gujar	agricultural caste
gurukul	college system founded by the Arya Samaj, on the lines of ancient Indian institutions
harijan	term used in reference to 'untouchables'
hartal	strike
havan	brahmanical fire sacrifice
Holi	Hindu festival
Id	Islamic festival
Idul-fitr	first day of the Muslim month Shawwal
jamiat	council
Janmastami	Hindu festival
Jat	agricultural caste mainly from western UP, Punjab and Rajasthan
jati	community, family or tribe, fixed by birth (cf. Jat)
Julaha	Muslim caste of weavers
Kalwar	caste of alcohol distillers
kapra	cloth
katha	reading and exposition of religious texts
Kayastha	caste of scribes
khadi/khaddar	coarse, home-spun cloth
Khattri	administrative and commercial caste
kirpan	ceremonial sword
kirtan	devotional song
kisan	cultivator, farmer
Kumbh Mela	Hindu bathing festival
Kurmi	agricultural caste
Kshatriya	Hindu upper caste of martial or royal status
lathi	stick, bludgeon
Lodhi	agricultural caste
Madhe Sahaba	Sunni verses in praise of the first four Khalifas
Magh Mela	Hindu bathing festival
Mahabharata	Hindu epic
Mahasabha	conference or meeting; organisation or association
majlis	Islamic religious meeting or gathering

mandir	temple
mantra	hymn, poem
masjid	mosque
mazbur	labourer
maulvi	Muslim priest or learned man
mela	festival, company of dancers taking part in a festival
mohalla	neighbourhood
Moharram	Islamic festival
nautanki	folk play or popular theatre
nawab	regional ruler under Mughal dynasties
panchayat	caste council or council of elders
pandal	pavilion
prabhat pheries	Congress morning processions
Puranas	a corpus of eighteen sacred Sanskrit Legends
qasbah	small town
Ramayana	Hindu epic describing the lives of Sita and Ram and his battle with the demon Ravan
Ramlila	Hindu festival
'Ramrajya'	rule of Ram
raksha	protection
sabha	association; society; council; assembly
sadhu	Hindu ascetic or mendicant
sangam	confluence two or more rivers
sangathan	movement for organisation or consolidation, usually of a community
sangh	assocation, organisation
sanyasis	ascetics
satyagraha	'truth force', non-violent passive resistance
seva/sewa	service
Shab-barat	'Night of Record', when the destinies of men are recorded for the coming year
sharbat	a sweet drink
shariat, sharia, shari'ah	Islamic law
shuddhi	'purification' and Hindu reconversion movement
swadeshi	home industry
swaraj	self-rule, independence; purna swaraj: perfect freedom
tabarra	Shia curses of the four Khalifas for their treatment of the descendants of the Prophet
taluqdar	landowner

Tanzeem	religious movement for the unity and organisation of Muslims
taziadar	model of the tomb of Hussein used in the Mohurram procession
Thakur	landholding caste
ulama	Islamic learned man
Vedanta	system of beliefs based on the philosophy of Sankara
Vedas	Early religious texts
Vaishya	upper caste, usually traders and commercial groups
vakil	lawyer, representative
vidyapith	university
virat	ruler, splendid one
Yadav	Hindu agricultural caste associated with cattle rearing; see also Ahir
zamindar	landlord, landowner

Abbreviations

AICC	All-India Congress Committee
APS	Weekly Appreciation of the Political Situation
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
GAD	General Administration Department
Home Poll.	Home Political Files, National Archives of India, New Delhi
IOR	Oriental and India Office Collections, London
L/PJ	Public and Judicial Department
MSS.EUR	Eurpean Manuscripts, Oriental and India Office Collections
NAI	National Archives of India, Delhi
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi
PAI	Police Abstracts of Intelligence
PIB/PP.Hin.	Proscribed Publications, Oriental and India Office Collections
PRO	Public Record Office, London
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SAS	Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge
UPNNR	United Provinces Native Newspaper Reports
UPPCC	United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee
UPSA	United Provinces State Archives

1 Introduction

The Indian National Congress was the most prominent and successful movement of anti-colonial nationalism in the twentieth century. It claimed to represent the Indian nation, irrespective of social, occupational, class, religious or caste differences. This position was in contrast to colonial discourses that often saw India's religious differences as irreconcilable. In claiming to transcend religious difference, the Congress represented itself as the only truly 'national' political movement and appeared to espouse secular nationalism. Yet, in the 1930s and 1940s, many of its agents continued to identify with forms of 'Hindu' politics and ideas of the 'Hindu' nation. This book explores how and why this paradox appeared in one of the most politically important provinces of India – the United Provinces or Uttar Pradesh (UP).

Remarkably, some of the most significant forms of communal politics manifested themselves within the Congress movement in UP. This is not to argue that the Congress was exclusively a 'Hindu' party or movement or even that Hindus existed as a homogeneous community. The terms 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' had fluid descriptive and representational meanings in this period. Precisely for this reason, some individual Congressmen were able to evoke symbolism with a 'Hindu' meaning whilst subscribing to a general stance of secular nationalism. Such politicians sometimes appeared to be deaf to the possible contradictions in their political language. Rather than promoting the secular, they were in fact often party to communal politics.

Historians have usually explained such contradictions by reference to factors outside the control of the Congress as an institution. In these analyses, communalism was a problem created by the colonial state, or generated by the response to that state of other 'communal' parties and agents. The Congress as a 'party' failed to overcome this largely external threat. Most writing on communalism in India has highlighted one or more of three such external factors: the adoption of 'separatist' politics by Muslims from the late nineteenth century, the appearance of institutions of 'Hindu nationalism' such as the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha,

and, thirdly, the actions of the colonial state in representing the Indian polity on the basis of divided communities.

Explanations of communalism have rarely taken sufficient account of the heterogeneity of the Congress, and how this heterogeneity played upon religious difference. In the late colonial period, the Congress was not a party but a broad-based movement. Even in a single province like UP, it seldom had a single set of coherent and well-defined agendas, or a structure of party discipline, apart from the broadest anti-colonial goal of political freedom. It was defined less by a concrete party manifesto than by the words and actions of those acting in its name. Within it there was room for a range of political voices. The nature of the political languages and ideologies of different Congress agents, then, is central to understanding what the Congress represented politically. This book is concerned with how and why this array of political languages within the UP Congress repeatedly made recourse to religious, particularly self-consciously 'Hindu', subjects and forms of symbolism. It was also of the utmost importance that these political languages and styles acted upon Muslims and Muslim politicians in UP.

The nature of Congress's political languages will be examined in relation to India's most politically dominant province in this period. The United Provinces of Agra and Oudh (Awadh) had the second largest provincial population after Bengal. It occupied about one-sixteenth of India but contained nearly one-seventh of the total population and had a greater population than either the British Isles or France in this period.[1] Most importantly, it was the homeland of a nationally significant Urdu-speaking Muslim elite, instrumental in setting up educational and political institutions which fostered a distinctively Indian Muslim politics. The presence of this significant Muslim minority had its impact on the growth of different types of settlement in the nineteenth century – the predominantly Muslim 'qasbah' and the 'Hindu corporate town'.[2] This area of India was also 'Aryavarta', the heartland of the Hindi movement from the late nineteenth century, and the location of perhaps the most significant sites of Hindu pilgrimage and melas. From the early twentieth century, Agra and Oudh (Awadh) became the crucible of the Congress movement, displacing the dominance of elites from the presidency capitals. This process was accelerated in the late 1910s and early 1920s when, through the experience of Muslim and Hindu mobilisation in the Khilafat agititations, the UP bazaar towns grew in political significance. This was

[1] A. C. Turner, *Census of India, 1931: United Provinces of Agra and Awadh Part 1 – Report* (Allahabad, 1932), p. 7.
[2] C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (Delhi, 1983), p. 456.

a province which by the 1930s, as in contemporary India, helped to define national politics. Consequently, by the 1930s at least, the working out of communal relations in UP had a huge impact on other parts of the subcontinent.

Nationalism and religious difference

The key to understanding how and why Congress agents made recourse to 'Hindu' symbolism in this part of the subcontinent is to look at the complex nature of Hindu nationalism and secularism in north India. Hindu nationalist ideologies and political languages that evoked the 'Hindu', like the Congress itself, were linguistically and socially varied. Since Hinduism did not represent an identifiable religious community, the terms 'Hindu nationalism', Hindu, or Hinduism are therefore highly problematic. As historians have recently observed, 'the conventional intellectual identification of "India" with the terms "Hindu" or "Hinduism" is deeply mistaken' since there is no original collective classification as such.[3] Nevertheless, a set of discourses about a Hindu political community, however mistaken in its sociological premises, did evolve in the late colonial period, through both colonial agency and Indian debate.[4] Institutions developed with the project of discussing the idea of the 'Hindu' – described as 'revivalist' because of their selection and rejuvenation of collective traditions. In some cases this revivalism involved a celebration of 'Hindu-ness' or the Hindu community. At other times it was a space for religious or social reform. The way Indians then represented communities and defined constituencies often mirrored the state's distribution of political powers[5] according to religious, ethnic and caste cleavages.[6]

[3] David Ludden, ed., *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India* (Philadelphia, 1996), p. 6. See also Heinrich von Stietencron, 'Religious Configurations in Pre-Muslim India and the Modern Concept of Hinduism', in Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich von Stietencron, eds., *Representing Hinduism: The Construction of Religious Traditions and National Identity* (New Delhi, 1995) p. 51. Romilla Thapar, 'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity', *Modern Asian Studies* 23, 2 (May 1989).

[4] Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 144–86.

[5] See Amiya P. Sen, *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal 1872–1905: Some Essays in Interpretation* (Delhi, 1993), pp. 12–19; Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Hariscandra and Nineteenth Century Banaras* (Delhi, 1997), pp. 1–15.

[6] T. N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India* (Delhi, 1997), pp. 252–3. This is supported by evidence from the census report of 1931: 'the leaders of the various communities eventually realised that as their shares of representation in the legislatures . . . would be determined mainly by the numerical strength of those communities, it would have been suicidal for any community to run the risk of under enumeration'. *Census of India, 1931, Part I. Report*, p. 6.

For the purposes of this book it is more important that a *sense* of 'Hindu-ness' or 'Hindu politics' was possessed by a range of Congress agents, than that 'Hindu' or 'Hinduism' could be identified as an entity, with fixed physical and theoretical boundaries. Moreover, the Congress did not aim, as an institution, to promote the interests of an imagined Hindu community. But because the Congress itself was by no means a homogeneous institution, individuals acting in its name could and did produce political ideas that evoked religious community. The existence of these languages did not, however, demonstrate that secularism and secular nationalism were intrinsically flawed within the Congress organisation. Conceptions of secularism, like Hinduism and Hindu nationalism, varied in north India and could easily exist as an institutional ideal alongside other ideologies, many of them religious in inspiration and fitted to local circumstances. Curiously, these separate ideologies, even though divergent, could clearly co-exist.

This co-existence has often proved difficult for historians to reconcile. In establishing the limits of Congress secularism in the 1930s and 1940s, some writers have briskly concluded that secularism must be incompatible with Indian culture.[7] The clearest idea to have emerged about Indian secularism has been the notion of the state maintaining an equal distance from all religions, which nevertheless are equally tolerated and respected. But, as early as the 1960s, disagreements arose about the applicability of western notions of secularism (implying separation of church from state or the idealisation of a non-religious political realm) to India. Some writers argued that secularism was applicable to the subcontinent, with a qualification that state secularism would inevitably be challenged by a largely non-secularised Indian society.[8] Others considered that an orthodox, western-style secular state was not feasible in India, arguing rather for a 'jurisdictionalist' state which concentrated on guaranteeing freedom of worship and conscience.[9] As many scholars have pointed out, the idea that secularism should take a different form in India when compared with Europe was inevitable, given the lack of an established church. Interpretations of secularism, like interpretations of Hinduism in India, have consequently been fluid and open.

Later theorisations of secularism by historians and political scientists have often replicated Congress's ambiguity over religious politics in the 1930s rather than simply explained it. Two alternative conceptions of

[7] Although secularism and ideas about the secular state are discussed by historians looking at the 1930s and 1940s, there are very few references to the word 'secular' or 'secularism' until the 1950s.

[8] Donald Eugene Smith, *India as a Secular State* (Princeton, N.J., 1963), pp. 493–501.

[9] Ved Prakash Luthera, *The Concept of the Secular State and India* (Calcutta, 1964), pp. 21–3.

secularism in India have emerged – the second of which will be discussed further below. It has become increasingly common for historians to theorise the inapplicability of secularism to the Indian context. Secularism, in this view, could only be accommodated to Indian social conditions if adapted beyond recognition. T. N. Madan, for instance, emphasises the rootedness of secularism in the dialectic of Protestant Christianity and the Enlightenment and thereby its incompatibility with India's religious traditions.[10] For Ashish Nandy, Indian religious traditions offer a solution to the problem of secularism itself since they contain within them a notion of a more catholic attitude of respect for all religions.[11] And for Partha Chatterjee it is doubtful whether secularism as an ideology will ever combat the problem of majoritarian communalism.[12] However, Amartya Sen has pointed out the implication of this 'anti-modernist' critique, which suggests that, as a Hindu nation, India can never be truly secular.[13] As will be seen in following chapters, advocates of the anti-modernist critique, even in its post-colonial garb, have held similar assumptions about India's religious traditions to those made by Congressmen in the 1930s and 1940s.

The historian still needs to account for the ambiguities of Congress secularism in the 1930s and 1940s, and why unambiguous forms of secularism were so weak. An approach to this question is to ask how far a single dominant form of secularism actually ever emerged within the Congress. It is difficult to argue that orthodox secularism as set out by Madan and Nandy should necessarily have failed for societal reasons, since it was never seriously tested in India in the 1930s and 1940s. Instead, the notion of secularism as a form of 'tolerance', which related to Indian traditions, was more prevalent. This was a multifacted idea of the secular, and could be interpreted in ways that allowed differing notions of the space of religion in political life. There were wide variants in interpretations

[10] T. N. Madan, 'Secularism in its Place', *Journal of Asian Studies* 46, 4 (1987), pp. 747–59. For Madan, secularism 'fails to recognise the immense importance of religion in the lives of the peoples of South Asia'.

[11] Ashish Nandy, 'The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance', *Alternatives* 13, 2 (1990), pp. 177–94. Nandy emphasises the importance of societal organisation over state formation to argue that secularism, being hegemonic, narrows the domain of significant choice-making.

[12] Partha Chatterjee, 'Secularism and Toleration', *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, 28 (1994), pp. 1768–77. Prakash Chandra Upadhyaya, 'The Politics of Indian Secularism', *Modern Asian Studies* 26, 4 (1992), pp. 815–53. Upadhyaya also discusses the problem of secularism in India, pointing out that majoritarian Congress secularism is not in fact true secularism.

[13] Amartya Sen, 'Secularism and its Discontents', in K. Basu and S. Subrahmanyan, *Unravelling the Nation: Sectarian Conflict and India's Secular Identity* (Delhi, 1996) pp. 17–18.

of secularism amongst UP Congressmen. Purushottam Das Tandon and Jawaharlal Nehru conceived of secularism as an entire divorce of state from religion (if not divorce of politics from religion, as in the case of Tandon). However, Tandon still possessed an idea of a nation of 'Hindus' and made reference to Hindu traditions and religion in descriptions of the nation. Even Nehru shared this approach of celebrating India's Hindu culture, although in a very different and lapsed form. As Madan has pointed out, Gandhi's 'secularism' was of a different kind, using religiosity to assert the basic equality of all religions.[14] This does not mean that secularism as an ideology was bound to fail in India, or that it was inapplicable to Indian conditions. Rather, secularism in India might better be described as containing a conglomeration of different ideologies, some of them adapted to political and social circumstances. The existence of variable forms of secularism in the UP Congress is explained by the equally variable engagement of Congressmen with religious symbolism in their political activity.

Alongside the mild Nehruvian celebration of India's Hindu culture, some UP Congressmen held that secularism could be actually contained within Indic traditions. This idea persists amongst spokespersons of the Hindu right: locating secularism within Indian ideas of 'sarva–dharma–sambhava' (all dharmas or religious beliefs being equal to or harmonious with each other); asserting that secularism 'has a long philosophical tradition going back to ancient times'; or highlighting the concept of 'dharma' as proof of India's essential religious toleration and propensity for secularism, is the second major stream of ideas on secularism.[15] These interpretations tend to single out the Muslim community as being ultimately responsible for communal antagonism.[16] They also accept uncritically the overlap between ancient Indian ideas of toleration and secularism or secularisation. This tendency to locate 'secularism' within Indian traditions is

[14] Madan, *Modern Myths*, pp. 235–8.

[15] M. M. Sankhdher, 'Understanding Secularism', in M. M. Sankhdher, ed., *Secularism in India: Dilemmas and Challenges* (New Delhi, 1995), pp. 4–7 ; L. M. Singhvi, 'Secularism: Indigenous and Alien', in *ibid.*, pp. 35–87. Amartya Sen would relate this tendency in Indian secularism to the 'prior identity critique' – the idea that religious identities are prior to national ones and that, therefore, as India is a Hindu country, secularism must be located within Hinduism. This logically leads into the 'favouritism critique' which suggests that the Indian state has in reality favoured the Muslim community. Sen, 'Secularism and its Discontents', pp. 15–17.

[16] Contributors to the Sankhdher volume cited above include Balraj Madhok, president of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, and H. V. Seshadari, general secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Madhok claims that the ideas of 'nationalist Muslims' such as Azad actually damaged 'Hindu secularism'. Sankhdher, *Secularism in India*, pp. 119–21. Seshadari asserts that 'Muslim communalism has now acquired a constitutional dignity by the term "minority rights"': Sankhdher, *Secularism in India*, p. 146.

particularly pertinent to this book, as it was shared by a range of 'Hindu', institutions as well as by the UP Congress.

This idea of the secular state being contained within Indian tradition was critical to the various nationalist expositions of Hinduism and the Hindu nation in the 1930s. As will be explained below, it was in the interests of Congress agents, when discussing the notion of 'Hindu', to make its meaning and provenance as wide as possible. The attractions of an ancient, essentially 'Hindu', traditional Indian secularism were clear: its flexible conceptual frameworks allowed a whole range of anti-colonial messages to be conveyed. Because the notion of 'Hindu' could be flexible and catholic, a diverse range of political languages, manipulating often very different traditions, were considered by observers to be essentially 'Hindu'. These languages and ideologies were part of a national project, and so Congress agents were party to a process whereby complex and differentiated voices were homogenised into an overriding concept of 'Hindu' tradition.

This is why, despite the diversity of Congress's political languages, this book has chosen to investigate that pertaining to the 'Hindu'. Throughout, these languages have been related to the term 'Hindu nationalism', because it was the *national* project of Congress which encouraged agents to select the homogenising notion of 'Hindu', encompassing, among other things, a concept of the secular state. This Hindu nationalism was, however, of a very different character to that of Savarkar and other Hindu ideologues, despite sharing some important basic premises. This book therefore gives Hindu nationalism a broad meaning for a particular reason but does not suggest that it is necessary to confuse and conflate the UP Congress with the harder exclusivist Hindu nationalism of the Sangh Parivar.

The looser forms of Hindu nationalism, which were more evident in Congress activity, are more problematic to define but more significant. Here there was very little, if any, advocacy of nationhood being the exclusive preserve of Hindus, as appeared in the thinking of Savarkar and RSS ideologues. Yet the activities of Congress spokespersons, through deliberate and public uses of religious symbolism, were accommodated into understandings of 'Hindu' traditions. In explaining this process, the concept of a dialogue through a mixture of political languages, ideologies and contextual meanings is central. Different social groups and sects would respond to these ideologies and languages of politics in variable ways – demonstrating that the UP Congressmen's relationship with Hindu nationalism was multifaceted.

On a practical level, association with public religious rituals enabled UP Congressmen in the locality to mobilise and legitimise themselves

in a mass movement. Religion rarely figured in discussions about party organisation at the provincial level.[17] But at local levels the nation was presented in propaganda using popular notions of Hinduism and folk culture. To achieve this, Congressmen and women drew illustrations and analogies from the great epics – the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.[18] As Congressmen moved and operated in different towns and districts of UP, rhetoric was often adapted to local religious and folk traditions but fitted within a homogenising framework. Hinduism could be theorised as a universal system, creating political legitimacy by integrating the sensibilities of other faiths and understandings about the nation and the wider world.[19] Congressmen might have maintained a sense of the 'communal', but this notion of the 'Hindu' was not considered to be a part of that realm.

These methods of theorising Hinduism were of course inherited from the revivalism of the late nineteenth century and older Tilakite and extremist influences.[20] Attempts to adapt Indian traditions to western organisation within the broad scope of a 'rationalised' Hinduism were also an even older preoccupation of institutions like the Brahmo Samaj.[21] Like late nineteenth-century revivalists, Congress nationalists in UP repeatedly illustrated the tension between an emulation of western political forms and an assertion of Indic supremacy.[22] Yet what was new about UP Congress formulations of the 'Hindu' was the holistic way in which key publicists incorporated Hinduism into overall conceptions of the Indian nation. This process cannot be described simply as a strategy. Its content and motive related to a complicated set of political relationships which will be explored throughout this book. Its forms emerged through a dialogic relationship between Congress and its constituencies, individual agents and the wider political sphere.

17 Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh: A Study in Imperfect Mobilization*, (Oxford, 1978) p. 71.

18 Marriott McKim, 'Cultural Policy in the New States', in Clifford Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (New York, 1963), pp. 31–41.

19 S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (Oxford, 1939), p. 313. A more recent explanation for this use of Hinduism is provided by Dawa Norbu who notes that 'modern ideology and rational techniques . . . tended to make what had been implicit in tradition more explicit'. Dawa Norbu, *Culture and the Politics of Third World Nationalism* (London, 1992), p. 222.

20 Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions*, pp. 21–7. When Bharatendu Harischandra addressed a meeting of the Arya Deshopakarini Sabha in 1889, he stated that the political welfare of the country should not be separated from matters of religion and that the abandonment of different beliefs by Hindus was urgent. Language, literature, religion and territorial allegiance were all aspects of being Hindu. Even Muslims were described as Hindus.

21 Amiya Sen, *Hindu Revivalism in Bengal*, pp. 31–46.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–29.

Just as the UP Congress acted as a forum for diverse political agencies, then, so these forms of Hindu nationalism appeared in different guises. They were reinforced by the curious interplay of politics at different levels of the colonial state. In order to build patronage networks and assert political authority in a district after 1920, access to political influence at the provincial level was also necessary. This process was strengthened as Congress institutions at village, town, district and provincial levels came to reflect the structures of the colonial state and administration. It is well known that what a Congress spokesperson did or said in a town or village could be very different from PCC (Provincial Congress Committee) activity. However, local activity impinged upon the province during elections.[23] Religious or caste politics at local levels, which often took forms reflecting the specific local context, could therefore acquire a provincial significance, albeit in a distorted fashion. Local political activity in turn often militated against the interests of provincial party organisations and tarnished the image of individual leaders. This is broadly illustrated in political transformations between the 1920s and 1930s in UP. It is clear that, for the whole of the 1920s, the Congress maintained direct, sometimes formal, associations with Hindu organisations at local levels. During the early and mid-1920s the Congress was closely allied with local Hindu Sabhas. Both organisations provided the financial and professional backing to sustain organised political activity.[24] However, these associations with Hindu communalism persisted in more informal forms into the 1930s despite the official all-India Congress's explicit rejection of 'communal' parties such as the Hindu Mahasabha.

So how did the Hindu idiom persist in the Congress at local levels and impact on the province? This book argues that Congress's close association with forms of secularism that were based on the attractive and adaptable notion of a 'Hindu' civilisation and culture broke down any possible taboo surrounding religious mobilisation in the locality. By the late 1930s this situation made it difficult for the Congress in power to contain and control religious conflicts. Neither could Congress be in a

[23] Likewise, provincial power bases also relied on networks of support in the districts. This makes the dichotomy between local and provincial-level political style even more interesting. Harold A. Gould, 'The Rise of the Congress System in a District Political Culture: The Case of Faizabad District in Eastern Uttar Pradesh', in Paul R. Brass and Francis Robinson, eds., *Indian National Congress and Indian Society, 1885–1985: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Dominance* (Delhi, 1987), pp. 242–309. See also Anil Seal, 'Imperialism and Nationalism in India', in John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson and Anil Seal, eds., *Locality, Province and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics, 1870–1940* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 26.

[24] Richard Gordon, 'The Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress, 1915–1926', *Modern Asian Studies* 9, 2 (April 1975), pp. 182–95.

position to act with a heavy hand after 1937, whilst the Muslim League accused it of being part of a 'Hindu conspiracy'. The importance of political language was perhaps nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the Congress ministry period from 1937 to 1939, when an accumulation of grievances surrounding Congress's political image allowed the party to be condemned for its 'Hindu' bias. This tension, then, between a striving for secularism and the attraction of particular forms of political language, was a part of the UP Congress as 'government' as well as 'agitator'. It was to affect the UP Congress well into the following decade, by which time a rejuvenated, strident identity politics had appeared in the form of the Muslim League.

Ideology, symbolism and language

Because political activity in the locality affected the Congress at the province and the centre, it is important to study political languages in their more localised manifestations: print journalism, the theatre of political processions and meetings and stump oratory, as well as political writings and manifestos. This necessarily contextual study of political language and symbolism is most usefully conceptualised at a broader level as 'ideology' at certain moments, and 'political language' at others. The distinction between these two phenomena is a difficult one. Ideology is arguably contained in all manner of languages, but is dependent upon a certain level of articulation. Hence, a collection of writings on politics are formulated ideologies, whilst the text of a speech, or the symbolism of a festival, within its historical context might be more appropriately accorded a looser description as a kind of political language. There have been sophisticated studies in other contexts of political ideas and action which employ the idea of interacting political languages. Some of the best examples of this look at the operation of *mentalité*, the overlapping of cultural languages and how they relate to national identity.[25] These approaches highlight the complementarity of political ideas espoused by individuals and groups, which are most effectively studied as something hybrid, or as a form of dialogue.[26] This book will argue that ideology relates closely to this looser definition of political language. This is because ideological transmission is the result of a multilinear

[25] See Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (London, 1984), especially pp. 62–5 and pp. 257–63.

[26] This has been discussed by D. A. Washbrook, 'Orients and Occidents: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire', in Robin W. Winks, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire,* vol. V: *Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 596–611.

communication between individuals and social groups. It is therefore best described as a dialogue or group of dialogues between different political languages.[27]

Looking at historical events as a product of intersecting languages and dialogues is pertinent to our understanding of any complex historical movement. It is particularly so for the analysis of Congress nationalism, and indeed for public discourse about the Hindu community. Both were open to varied and diverse representations. Political languages and ideologies in UP were not necessarily closely related to social or 'class' interests. The provenance of symbols and forms of language and the meaning of political messages for those using them were perhaps more central.[28] Languages and ideologies introduce complexity and contradiction. Hence, as will be seen in the following pages, Congress secularists engaged in religious rhetoric; socialists at certain moments identified with positions more akin to the Hindu right and Muslim artisans involved themselves in Hindu festivals.

This book is particularly concerned with national languages and languages about the nation. It aims to demonstrate that such languages were stratified internally through different social dialects, the influences of group behaviour, professional jargons, and generic language. This analysis of intersecting dialects, jargons and languages has been a preoccupation of theorists concerned with literature, in particular the novel. One theorist has described such collections of languages as 'heteroglossia'.[29] Although this book deals with historical processes, it takes up the notion of heteroglossia as a methodology for understanding the social dynamics of political language.

For Bakhtin, the key to political language as 'heteroglossia' is the idea of the 'dialogue' – an intersection of two or more possibly contradictory languages or tendencies. Through their dialogic relationship, a meaning

27 Michael Holquist, ed., *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (Austin, 1981).

28 See Clifford Geertz, 'Ideology as a Cultural System', in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London, 1993), p. 203. For Geertz, where a stress is placed on strategy or the 'interests' of social configurations, the individual psychological effects of ideology as a 'symbolic outlet' for emotional disturbance are ignored. To get to the bottom of this 'symbolic outlet', the student of ideology must get to grips with processes of symbolic formulation, to uncover 'systems of interacting symbols . . . [and] patterns of interworking meanings'.

29 M. H. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 262–71. Bakhtin goes into detail about the internal dialogism of single words – of the relationships of heteroglossia within them – but also makes the point that 'the living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specified environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to participate in social dialogue'.

quite different from the sum of their parts might result: the speaker's 'orientation towards the listener is an orientation towards a specific conceptual horizon, towards the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse'.[30] As will be seen in chapter 2, throughout the early 1930s UP Congress leaders organised meetings during religious festivals and bathing fairs. The symbolism for the nation which appeared in speeches and other forms of political imagery on these occasions naturally drew upon religious themes. But those themes acquired a different meaning through the audience response and environmental context of the religious festival. The result can be seen as a set of dialogic relationships between Congress agent, audience and the significance of the environment.

But there is more to an ideological utterance than the social space between speaker and listener. That social space can be distorted, changed or refracted by the internal heteroglossia of the meanings of the utterance itself. For Bakhtin, 'at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth'.[31] Speech and writing in the name of the Congress in UP regularly employed comparisons between the British colonial state and the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. But the image of Aurangzeb as oriental despot was largely derived from European scholarship, which compared Aurangzeb to English rulers. As an idea, then, the evocation of the Mughal past was one set of symbols with a range of internal dialogic dynamics.

Nevertheless, critical writing on post-colonial theory has suggested that a purely Bakhtinian contemplation of fragmentary or carnivalesque voices, seen in a dialogue, pontentially leads to an intellectual cul-de-sac.[32] Heteroglossia is a useful tool. But to study political language in relation to political action it is important to consider and re-emphasise two further dimensions: firstly, historical time and change and, secondly, institutional, political and social context. Here, it is useful to combine a dialogistic approach to political language with Quentin Skinner's ideas about intentionality and illocutionary force. Skinner's writings on 'meaning and understanding' help the historian to combine questions of intention and context when thinking about single utterances

30 *Ibid.*, p. 282. 31 *Ibid.*, p. 291.

32 Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook, 'After Orientalism: Culture, Criticism and Politics in the Third World', in Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London, 2000), pp. 209–19.

or collections of writings. As Skinner put it, it is necessary 'to trace the relations between the given utterance and . . . [a] wider linguistic context as a means of decoding the actual intention of the given writer'. Historical as well as linguistic context, then, is crucial. Moreover, an author's meaning will often diverge from his or her intention, suggesting that it is important to look at the illocutionary force – *the act in the utterance* – rather than simply the utterance itself.[33] The problem, then, is not simply the relationships of meanings that manifest themselves within political languages, but, more importantly, how these meanings relate to political action. This book looks at how, for instance, the utterances of the Congress leader Sampurnanand on language and education issues related to forms of political action that could not have been guessed from language itself. Sampurnanand promoted the broader use of Sanskrit words in Hindi, which in itself was a matter of intellectual curiosity. But in the context of the late 1930s Congress ministries and the range of Sampurnanand's other political activities, his comments on Hindi acquired a 'communal' meaning.

It seems clear that this approach offers a departure from assumptions that particular discourses are baldly tied to particular dynamics of social power. If instead discourses are the result of a more fluid overlapping of political languages, then it becomes difficult to talk of the specific 'consciousness' or political realms of discrete social groups. For example, it cannot be assumed that the realm of violent and communal political action is necessarily that of the 'subaltern'. Of course, political power is *linked* to the languages that discourses produce. But this does not necessarily help us with political ideology. For the latter, it is more illuminating to look at the points where languages intersect rather than exclude each other. Such an approach allows the historian to make a more realistic assessment of the relationship between political ideas and action: it looks simultaneously at the external, contextual circumstances surrounding political language, alongside the particular social circumstances of the individual speaker. It does not put an *emphasis* on the power relationship between different forms of language, although it accepts that such a relationship might exist. If a study of political language helps the historian to study the effects of ideas on action, then there are new possibilities here for work on religious violence. As will be explained below and throughout the book, the phenomenon of 'communalism' was another site where different languages concerning the 'Hindu' elided at some moments and came into competition at others.

[33] Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', in James Tully, ed., *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his Critics* (Oxford, 1988), p. 55.

Historiographical context, Congress and communalism

The assumption that communalism is a problem relating to institutions and agencies largely outside the Congress, as argued at the beginning of this introduction, has been the leitmotiv of nearly all writing on late colonial Uttar Pradesh. So far, there have been two broad trends in this historiography of communalism and nationalism. Firstly, a great deal of work has represented 'true' and modernising Indian nationalism as essentially battling against a communal other.[34] In these analyses, 'communalism' is a definite product of particular political circumstances in the colonial context. Secondly, and in contrast, other historians have found it difficult to argue that the 'problem' of communalism relates to specific moments, events and circumstances of the late colonial period. Instead, for these writers there are long-term social and regional bases for Hindu–Muslim estrangement, which make the more immediate activities of late colonial nationalist politicians less relevant. In the following pages it will be suggested that both of these interpretations encourage particular assumptions about UP Congress nationalism which are difficult to sustain in the light of Congress agents' diverse political languages.

The first historiographical tendency as introduced above, then, has viewed communalism and nationalism as 'emerging' phenomena. In this work, the UP Congress becomes an organisation with the fixed purpose of 'mass mobilisation', which is constrained in its nationalist development by becoming gradually aware of the divisiveness of communalism.[35] This book, in contrast, does not view nationalism as a predominantly 'modernising' force. Rather than charting nationalism's linear development, it will be suggested that Hindu ideologies and languages of politics related to discrete circumstances, and fluctuated rather than developed within the political context. Congress's relationship with Hindu nationalism was intermittent and changeable right up to the 1940s. Its use of religious symbolism was not easily explained on the level of a developing discourse and awareness of communalism, or through phases of public sphere and national activity.[36]

34 Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi, 1990), pp. 235–7.

35 Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*.

36 In contrast, Sandria Freitag has described nationalism in UP as the linking of two 'emerging' ideologies of nationalism and communalism within the 'public sphere'. Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 292–7. Gyanendra Pandey highlights the development of a discourse of 'pure' nationalism which gradually becomes more aware of the divisiveness of communal identity. Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, pp. 235–7. As the 1930s progressed, communalism came

The second historiographical trend contrasts with this view of a linear, developing sense of communal identity and nationalism. In this second literature, there is the suggestion that it is possible to locate a long-term social basis for Hindu–Muslim estrangement in India. This estrangement is linked to the decline of the 'qasbah' Muslim gentry in one account, which focuses more on the early part of the nineteenth century,[37] and to the history of later-century Muslim separatism in another.[38] Congress's failure to co-opt Muslims is connected in such arguments with social and economic competition and the appearance of political elites in north India that sponsored Hindi, Hindu revivalism and cow protection between the 1880s and 1920s. These elites have been linked to alliances between Hindu commercial groups, such as the Tandon family in Allahabad, and high-caste patrons of religious institutions, such as Madan Mohan Malaviya.[39] Patronage remained important into the 1930s and 1940s. But alongside this continuity very new kinds of political operators were involved by the 1930s. These changes and differing Congress personnel are explained by the more developed nature of Congress institutions, which complicated systems of political patronage by the 1930s.

There are other limitations to the long-term Hindu–Muslim estrangement argument. Emphasising historic social divisions between Hindus and Muslim elites in northern India does not fully explain the alienation of Muslims from Congress and the perpetuation of religious rhetoric at a more popular level. This is particularly the case after 1937 when the widened franchise gave this rhetoric a new political significance.

to be regarded, in Pandey's analysis, 'as a distorted and distorting tendency'. 'Indian Nationalism as we know it – a nationalism that stood *above* (or outside) the different religious communities and took as its unit the individual Indian citizen, a 'pure' nationalism unsullied, in theory, by the 'primordial' pulls of caste, religious community, etc. – was, I suggest, rigorously conceptualised only in opposition to this notion of communalism.'

37 See Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, pp. 335–45. The decline of the 'qasbah' Muslim gentry is described in comparison with Hindu commercial groups in north India. In a more recent work it has been suggested that Hindu–Muslim communal divergence, although rare in occurrence, can be recognised in an even earlier period. C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 27–9.

38 Francis Robinson, 'The Congress and the Muslims', in Brass and Robinson, *Indian National Congress and Indian Society*, pp. 162–5. Robinson identifies four strands in theories about Hindu–Muslim estrangement – the idea of Muslim decline; the impact of an imperial system which sought partners and collaborators in government (which defined channels of patronage along lines of religious community); the argument that Congress was heavily influenced by Hindu symbolism; and, finally, the arguments about Muslim separatism. The vigourous Muslim revivalist movement in the early nineteenth century is described as being entangled with a Perso-Islamic tradition which always had its eyes turned away from India. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

39 Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, pp. 455–6; See also C. A. Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics: Allahabad 1880–1920* (Oxford, 1975), p. 217.

Congress's electoral base became more diverse, encouraging extended informal political participation.[40] Questions still remain, then, of how and why Muslims continued to find it difficult after 1937 'to distinguish between Hindu leadership and Congress leadership, Hindu populism and Indian nationalism'.[41]

Long-term factors do not sufficiently explain Hindu–Muslim antagonism by the late 1930s, but medium-term factors were critical. The refusal of Congress to enter into a coalition with the League in 1937 has been described as a defining moment of Muslim estrangement.[42] The 1937–9 ministry was indeed important for Congress–League relations in UP, but its full significance related to the shape of Congress activity from the early 1930s. There was little direct political antagonism between Congress and League in 1936, with both parties working together to secure candidates in the elections. The reinvention of the League as champion of the Muslim community against a 'Hindu' Congress was only made possible by the on-going image of the latter party. Muslim accusations about 'Hindu Raj' therefore had to appear credible, and the League thrived by drawing on Congress's nationalist symbolism.

Although UP has been seen as the crucible of 'communalism' in the 1930s, 1940s and beyond,[43] the voluminous literature on UP has treated somewhat lightly the specific significance of Congress's relationship with Hindu nationalism. Gyanendra Pandey, Sandria Freitag, Mushirul Hasan and Zoya Hasan have all identified institutional overlaps between the UP Congress and the Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj. But the reasons why these links persisted, and their ideological and practical significance, has only been obliquely pointed out.[44] Neither has research carried out on

[40] The popularisation of 'Hindu defence', for example, can be seen in UP towns in the inter-war period, with lower-caste groups championing the causes of Hindu sangathan. Nandini Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 195.

[41] Robinson, 'The Congress and the Muslims', p. 176.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] Much of this work is divided chronologically with the line in the 1930s: N. G. Barrier, ed., *The Roots of Communal Politics* (New York, 1976); Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*; Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism*. Some of the work on contemporary communalism sheds a light on earlier UP politics. For example, Gyanendra Pandey, ed., *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today* (New Delhi, 1993); Asghar Ali Engineer and Moin Shakir, eds., *Communalism in India* (Delhi, 1985); Ayesha Jalal, 'Exploding Communalism: The Politics of Muslim Identity in South Asia', in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, eds., *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India* (Delhi, 1997); Rajni Kothari, 'Class and Communalism in India', *Economic and Political Weekly* 23, 49 (3 December 1988), pp. 2589–92; K. N. Pannikar, *Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture* (Delhi, 1991).

[44] Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism*, pp. 255–6. The 'unknown' aspect of religion continued to creep into and have a mysterious influence on what Pandey describes as a 'pure' nationalism.

Hindu communal organisations in UP and north India generally been concerned with ideological links with the Congress.[45] Nevertheless, historians have readily acknowledged the importance of the ideological influence of Hindu communalism on Indian nationalism in general. For example, Sumit Sarkar writes:

> It has often seemed important for even the most secular of Indian nationalists to derive sustenance and authenticity from images of subcontinental unity . . . extending back into a supposedly glorious past . . . the tendency has remained strong to assume some kind of cultural or civilisational integration as the ultimate foundation of nationalism. And then it becomes difficult – even for a Nehru writing his *Discovery of India* – to resist the further slide towards assuming that unity, after all, has been primarily Hindu.[46]

The setting

This book is concerned throughout with the words, ideas and actions of politicians in UP, who contributed to this edifice of both the secular and the Hindu nation. The parameters of political activity for these figures, their background, and the forms of political communication that they adopted will be introduced briefly below. The success and adaptability of Congress leaders were related to the context of the late colonial state in north India. This state placed a number of constraints on Congress politicians, to some extent delineating their political possibilities. In particular, the Indian state in the 1930s and 1940s worked in a dialogue with Indian leaders in setting the parameters of social, religious and ethnic identities. Community and caste were not the exclusive inventions or constructions of Indians or Europeans within the state, working as bureaucrats, officials, policemen and soldiers. Neither were such identities predominantly moulded by nationalist leaders. Instead, community or communal identity – another theme running through this book – was a product of the

[45] Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party* (Philadelphia, 1969); B. D. Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Cambridge, 1990); Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity Building, Implantation and Mobilisation (with Special Reference to Central India)* (London, 1996); Gyanendra Pandey, 'Hindus and Others: The Militant Hindu Construction', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26, 52 (28 December 1991); Gyanendra Pandey, 'Which Of Us Are Hindus?', in Pandey, *Hindus and Others*; Peter Van Der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley, 1994); Achin Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism: Religion, Modernity and Secularisation* (London, 1997). An exception to this is provided by Sumit Sarkar in 'Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva', in David Ludden, *Contesting the Nation*, pp. 271–2. Vanaik, *Furies of Indian Communalism*, is also alive to the contradictions within the Congress organisation, pp. 30–2.

[46] Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (Delhi, 1997), p. 363.

same kinds of political dialogues that helped to forge Congress notions of the Hindu nation. Indeed, the latter provided the content for what was understood as community and communalism in the 1930s and 1940s. If political dialogue had a bearing on communal identity, it was also central to religious violence in UP. What was the context for this violence, what themes did it pick up and how did it, too, become a form of political communication?

The ambit of most of the Congress leaders discussed in this book was the district. It was in this administrative and geographic setting that he or she would normally set up a career, and in some cases the district determined political identities. The state had assisted this process: British administrators and census reporters had described the human and physical characteristics of UP in terms of its forty-eight districts, acknowledging these areas as the basic units of colonial power.[47] By the 1920s the district was also the key territorial unit for political parties. Political constituencies were brought into existence within the ambit of districts, where staff and civil servants could ensure contact between subject and government. UP's districts developed separate political characteristics, centred on district capitals which were the home of bureaucracies, courts and the main representative institutions.

Although most of our UP Congress leaders were primarily urban politicians, there was a strong political awareness of the predominantly rural character of the province. In some cases, this was reflected in the styles of mobilisation and forms of symbolism employed by leaders. There was reason behind this approach: the majority in UP lived on barely economic holdings and incomes. In the mid-1940s, about 81 percent of UP's rural population cultivated or occupied holdings of 5 acres or less, a barely economic existence. The situation in UP, particularly in rural areas, was relatively poor compared with the rest of British India – in the eastern part of the province, even after Independence, it was found that the eating of carrion was quite common. Here, and in Awadh, the weight of the rental demand was more onerous on the poor than in other regions, and districts such as Gorakhpur were densely populated with divided and fragmented holdings.[48] This meant that UP was particularly vulnerable

[47] In descending order of area size these were: Garhwal, Almora, Gorakhpur, Mirzapur, Jhansi, Kheri, Banda, Allahabad, Gonda, Basti, Naini Tal, Bahraich, Hamirpur, Kanpur, Hardoi, Meerut, Moradabad, Sitapur, Azamgarh, Saharanpur, Budaun, Aligarh, Bulandshahr, Agra, Bijnor, Unao, Shahjahanpur, Bara Banki, Rae Bareli, Fyzabad, Etah, Sultanpur, Etawah, Mainpuri, Muzaffarnagar, Farrukhabad, Fatehpur, Bareilly, Jaunpur, Jalaun, Muttra, Partabgarh, Pilibhit, Ghazipur, Ballia, Dehra Dun, Banaras, Lucknow. *Census of India, 1931*, p. 13.

[48] Pandey, *Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, pp. 18–21; Eric Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj: Studies in Agrarian Society and Peasant Rebellion in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 1978).

to the severe economic crises of the immediate post-war period and the years after 1928. In the latter period, it was precisely the large body of non-occupancy tenants in Awadh and eastern UP who were most badly hit by a slump which by 1931 was to be critical in building a popular base in some regions for Congress's civil disobedience, particularly no-rent movements, in this region.[49]

Members of the Indian National Congress at its inception in the 1880s had been drawn largely from the presidency capitals. Although Gandhian politics had placed a new emphasis on rural mobilisation by the 1920s, cities were still privileged as the main bases of organisation for UP leaders. The most significant urban centres with populations of over 100,000 were Kanpur, Lucknow, Allahabad, Banaras and Agra, all of which will figure centrally in this book. Kanpur, the largest industrial centre, was the only city in the province that owed its existence to trade and commerce, having developed tanneries and cotton mills by the 1860s. Its industrial base was expanding rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s with twenty-six new large factories registered in the former decade.[50] Lucknow, with a population of 251,097 in 1931, was the seat of provincial Mughal government and of the Nawab of Awadh. It had a significant Shia population and was famed as a literary and cultural centre. Allahabad or 'Prayag' had acted as the provincial capital in the late nineteenth century and was the centre of the UP high court. Like Banaras, the city was also a centre of pilgrimage at the time of the Magh and Kumbh Melas, being located at the point of the confluence or sangam of the Yamuna, Ganga and mythical Sarawati rivers. According to a census commissioner, this was 'a city which produces nothing except written matter, and imports even its wastepaper baskets'.[51] Banaras was an ancient Hindu city with an apparent antiquity dating back to Vedic times. In the nineteenth century it had been the most important commercial city, producing and trading silks and muslin, but it was quickly overtaken by Kanpur.[52] Agra was another important centre of modern commercial and industrial activity, with a population that was expanding rapidly in the period between 1921 and 1931.

The employment of a 'Hindu' idiom by some UP leaders had a differentiated impact in these urban environments, depending on the communities that dominated each city. A greater proportion of the population of western districts lived in towns, many of which, being originally Muslim

[49] Pandey, *Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, pp. 165–70.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 142; C. S. Chandrasekhara, 'Kanpur: an Indian Metropolis', in R. P. Misra, ed., *Million Cities of India* (New Delhi, 1978), pp. 273–303; Chitra Joshi, *Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and its Forgotten Histories* (Delhi, 2003), pp. 15–61.
[51] *Ibid.*
[52] For more detail on these cities see Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*, pp. 28–31.

foundations, had relatively large Muslim populations. In certain towns, particularly in the west of the province, Muslims made up over half of the urban population: to name a few, in Saharanpur they were in a 58.9 per cent majority, in Budaun 58.2 per cent, in Moradabad 57.6 per cent and in Bareilly 52.2 per cent. They also formed large minorities in towns such as Meerut (where they made up 49.1 per cent of the population) Aligarh (42.8 per cent), Lucknow (40.5 per cent), Muzzafarnagar (37.2 per cent) and Gorakhpur (36.3 per cent).[53] These figures conceal the internal complexity of these communities, which were divided on the basis of occupation, sect and caste. Yet the fact that political power and municipal seats were decided on the basis of these figures meant that where disagreement and political conflict occurred they were more likely to be sustained in areas of significant religious minorities.

Ideological differentiation in the UP Congress was complex too. This was despite the attempted rationalisation of some of its leading figures. Four years after his return to India from South Africa, tired of wandering in the political wilderness, without a secure regional base and armed with 'satyagraha', M. K. Gandhi spurred the Congress into widening its support base, setting up provincial, district and town organisations and committing it to the dictatorship of a Working Committee. But despite this apparent centralising and rationalising spirit, Congress, by acting as a national umbrella organisation for divergent political positions, inadvertently promoted regional differentiation. This is illustrated succinctly in UP. At the 'intermediate' level of Congress leadership, in the towns and districts of the province, there were large differences both in terms of ideology and social background. In the 1920s, Harihar Nath Shastri of Banaras, Raghava Das, a Maharashtrian, and the Bengali Vishwananath Mukherji were followers of the Mazdur Sabha, Sanatan Dharm and revolutionary terrorism respectively. At this level of district and town leadership, social origins were quite varied. In the late 1920s and 1930s, the UP Congress was being strongly supported by provincial commercial magnates, and a large section of district leadership was drawn from professional groups – men such as Algu Rai Shastri in Meerut, Sampurnanand and Sri Prakash in Banaras. But now there were also some highly influential leaders with rural origins, able to maintain Congress's link to the kisan organisations – figures like Satyanarain Srivastava of Rae Bareli and Tikaram Tripathi of Allahabad.[54]

This intermediate level of Congress leadership in UP was in some cases quite isolated from the all-India stage of political activity and therefore

[53] *Census of India, 1931, Report*, p. 138.
[54] Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, pp. 47–58.

often sought regional or provincial foci for political activity. It was assisted in this by the relatively decentralised nature of political communication itself. Two of the most important modes of such communication were education and the press. The period from 1920 to Independence, then, saw a burgeoning of interest in and discussion about education, and its institutions became a platform and medium for the dissemination of political ideas. This was particularly true for a group of Congress leaders central to this book – UP literati, who were able to further agendas both within politicised institutions and through debates about education themselves. Here the Arya Samaj was also crucial in its sponsorship of gurukul education and its pervasive links, particularly in western UP, with local Congressmen. This growth in interest in educational issues in UP mirrored the expansion of the number of overall institutions there, from 12,912 in 1917 to 22,068 in 1927.[55]

Some of the main controversies of our period were expressed through education by UP leaders. A good example here is the Hindi–Urdu dispute. The question of script and language was to some extent limited to specific regions, such as UP, and particular institutions, among them the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, the Nagri Pracharini Sabha and the Urdu Defence Associations. But the question of the national language also had a much broader provenance, manifesting itself in debates about textbooks and school curricula. The vehement advocacy of Hindi became the battle cry of those using institutions such as the gurukuls as a political arena. The question of Hindi also came into broader educational programmes like the Wardha scheme. In connection with the latter, debates surrounding the teaching of Indian history and its apparent stress on 'Hindu' periods were crucial to the Muslim League reaction and propaganda in the mid-to-late 1930s.

Attempts to promote education in the vernaculars linked into the growth of the vernacular press. Perhaps the most significant section of UP Congress leaders – figures such as P. D. Tandon, Krishna Dutt Paliwal, Balkrishna Sharma and Sampurnanand – were at the centre of this explosion in literary output. The earliest Hindi papers were published in Bengal and followed the political and social agendas of that province. But by the last two decades of the nineteenth century UP had become the centre of a journalism which went hand in hand with the political aspirations of the UP literati. Journals were initiated with the main purpose of covering themes linked to social and family issues, to entertain and promote religious and general education, and to delineate the domestic and political roles of women. Other political newspapers were not

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

started simply to fulfil a readership's desire for news. Their motivation was connected less to the nature of the growing market in information needs than to the agendas of institutions and political agents, or literary patrons. Political journalism, then, was not simply a profession like that of teaching or medicine. It was also a means to influence and power, forming an integral part of a political operator's education, and a method of forming contacts and networks within political institutions. Newpapers rose and fell on the strength of broader issues: the language debates, the appearance of communal controversies, the fortunes of political parties, sabhas and sites of education. Not surprisingly, it was the 1910s through to the 1940s which witnessed the greatest explosion in the quantity and individual examples of printed periodical literature.

Journal literature in UP in the early twentieth century was divided by the official mind into 'private' and 'public', and the UP Congress literati were involved in both supposed genres. Government was little interested in personal or social periodicals, perhaps dealing with the domestic sphere and questions of education, since it was believed that their non-political content rendered them innocuous.[56] This division was artificial. The relationship between domestic and public issues was clearly implicit in the language used to describe the political duties of the readership – a language encouraged by the key editors and patrons of papers and journals in UP. This is repeatedly evident in periodicals such as *Madhuri* and *Cand* for the 1920s and 1930s – magazines which, whilst covering advice about practical matters and featuring short stories, also discussed political education. These journals also enjoyed direct links with political institutions.[57]

The associations of leading Hindi-promoting elites and politicians with journalistic projects, alongside political agitation, meant that the press

[56] Gail Minault, *Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi, 1998), p. 105.

[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 122–6. Shaikh Abdullah and Wahid Jahan Begam started a journal, *Khatun*, from Aligarh, were involved in the All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference, and advocated the founding of a girls' school in the city – a project achieved by 1906. Vir Bharat Talwar, 'Feminist Consciousness in Women's Journals in Hindi, 1910–20', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds., *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History* (New Delhi, 1989), pp. 208–10. The first great Hindi journalist of UP to concentrate on 'women's issues' was Bharatendu Harischandra of Banaras. This journalist concentrated on social questions surrounding female education by using an idiom which highlighted ideas about national unity, the language question and communal literacy. But there was also a range of journals organised and produced by female journalists: for example, *Arya Mahila*, another periodical from Banaras, which drew inspiration for women's rights from a representation of ancient Indian states. In 1922, *Cand* first appeared in Allahabad, managed by Vidyavati Sehgal and edited by Ramrikh Sehgal and Ramkrishna Mukund Laghate. Alongside *Grihalakshmi* and *Stree Darpan*, these journals had helped to make Allahabad a centre of journalistic activity.

was not an anonymous voice. Newspapers linked directly into city, district and provincial controversies. They were recognised by all parties as essential organs of political influence as well as propaganda. In an attempt to improve Congress's position with Muslim groups in UP in 1946, the 'Muslim mass contacts' office produced a detailed list of potentially sympathetic Urdu newspapers and 'reactionary' pro-Muslim League journals. For example, Congress agents noted that the *Tanvir* – a daily journal – was anti-Congress, essentially because it was owned by Chaudhuri Khaliquzzaman, a figure who had left the Congress for the League in 1937. The personalities behind the 'Muslim Nationalist' papers were also taken into account in compiling the list. It was proposed that a bulletin be prepared out of the entire Urdu Muslim press each week to 'acquaint the AICC with the views' of Nationalist Muslims and 'communally minded' Muslims. Then, the list of 'nationally minded' newspapers was to be prepared for the establishment of direct political contacts, whilst the management, circulation and sources of finance of the communal press were to be investigated.[58]

The UP press, which commonly characterised political movements using a popular idiom of historical reference and scriptural analogy, linked closely to other public displays involving UP Congressmen: the techniques of public orators, the conduct of religious festivals and the activities and speeches of sadhus and holy men. The significance of the press's use of specific forms of political language, then, can be viewed in terms of interconnections with public activities at other levels – other forms of media, in which symbols and political expressions took on a new life and meaning, altering with context and time period. The political significance of press information affects our understanding of technology and change and therefore the physical basis on which political connections operated. In this sense, the press, studied as a medium of social organisation and a mechanism of political change, allows the historian to assess the concrete effects of political languages and ideologies. In the following pages and chapters the press therefore appears as both historical source and subject.

The control and use of organs of communication by the UP Congress literati were important to Congress's broadened appeal across north India in the 1930s. Structural reorganisation and reduction in membership fees in the early 1920s had of course served to diversify Congress's constituency. These diversities can be seen in the social composition of the Congress organisation in a province such as UP. But, through the press and education, a process of homogenisation was also occurring.

[58] 'Muslim Mass Contacts – Urdu Newspapers', Papers of the All-India Congress Committee (hereafter AICC) G-23/1946.

Individual UP leaders sought to mould movements of agitation such as civil disobedience through an overarching set of idioms, including a new and broadened sense of the 'Hindu community'. The concept of what the 'Hindu' nation and people were, and the symbols used to represent those myths, changed in the process. So did the Congress organisation's difficulties in detaching itself from this singular set of ideologies and languages, in an attempt to appeal to all religious communities across the subcontinent.

In this nation-building project, the Congress was of course heavily constrained by the colonial state, which propounded contrasting views about what constituted the political nation. There was no single colonial construction of the Indian polity. At certain times and for some administrators, India was a hopelessly diverse mixture of heteroglot traditions and communities: like the Muslim rulers before them, the British were to settle the land on the basis of the variable social hierarchies found in Agra and Oudh (Awadh).[59] However, the ideology of rule had now been transformed in a significant way: caste and religion were seen to be the really critical and essentially weak nodes of social organisation, contributing to political instability and the problem of transitory regimes.[60] The revolt of 1857–8 persuaded administrators to follow a 'landlord' policy in UP which was again moulded by a particular perception of the already existing social hierarchies. This policy was based on a need to win over an aristocratic group which, it was felt, would prevent the broader alienation of north Indian society. In Awadh, this meant a stress on the social predominance and political importance of the taluqdars.

This 'Awadh policy' was also important in reinforcing British notions of the primacy of religious organisation within Hindu society and the nature of hierarchies connected with that society. It encouraged the colonial state to view and represent social conflict in terms of broad religious antagonisms between the Hindu and the Muslim. Harcourt Butler, Lieutenant Governor (later Governor) of UP between 1918 and 1922, placed great emphasis on the 'Brahmanic' influence of the taluqdars in Awadh and through them talked of 'Brahmanic revival'.[61] By privileging the notion of a north Indian aristocracy, which would maintain a special relationship with the state, administrators such as Butler were extending a central plank of Victorian imperial notions. The imperial durbar of 1877 had also delineated chivalric values within a highly symbolic quasi-feudal

[59] For a detailed account of the limitations of colonial power, see Stokes, *The Peasant and the Raj*, pp. 30–2.
[60] A. C. Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, 2nd edn (London, 1899), vol. I, p. 204, cited in *ibid.*, p. 22.
[61] Peter Reeves, *Landlords and Governments in UP* (Oxford, 1991) p. 51.

relationship between Empress and Indian aristocracy.[62] The relationship between this Awadh landed elite and the colonial state formed the backbone of British policy in the districts of eastern UP.

Establishing a particular hierarchy in methods of consultation meant that the colonial state granted political privileges to those groups capable of representing themselves along the lines of colonial sociological categories. This encouraged pressure groups to set out their 'special interests' and to push for weighted or special representation in the limited but expanding arenas of political power – district and municipal boards from the late nineteenth century, and provincial assemblies after 1909. In the United Provinces these special interests could be corporate: in 1917, the Agra zamindars petitioned Montagu for the reservation of a number of seats for landlords in the new legislative reforms. The new constitution of the 1920s was also carefully geared to privilege landowning classes. More importantly, from 1909 the Government of India and the Secretary of State had set in place the notion of special representation for particular religious communities. This emanated from the United Provinces – again from an embattled Muslim elite who represented themselves in terms of political and historical importance. By the 1910s and 1920s this also gave Muslims weighted representation on municipal boards (one outcome of the 1916 UP Municipalities Act) and, after 1922, generous representation on district boards. The smaller their proportion within the population, the greater was their relative share of seats.[63]

These colonial attempts at organising political participation inevitably affected the political sphere of UP Congress leaders. The most obvious constraints on the Congress involved communal electorates. But the chinks in the armour of the state offered a different, almost paradoxical challenge to Congress's national vision. Administering large areas of land, with huge and diverse populations, the colonial state was too weak not to rely upon the cooperation of local agents. And the subordinate bureaucracy, given its head in villages and towns, inevitably operated through local power networks. These could work with or against the Congress. Most significantly, Indian control of local bureaucracies allowed the state to undermine the notion that the Congress represented all Indians. And it placed a baton in the hands of Indians to enforce that view. Likewise, groups attempting to take power in any particular locality recognised the

[62] For a detailed narrative of this durbar, see E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

[63] Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 25. Where Muslims constituted less than 1 per cent of the population of a district, they received 10 per cent of the district board seats. Where they constituted 1–5 per cent, they received 15 per cent of seats, where 5–15 per cent, 25 per cent and where 15–30 per cent, 30 per cent of seats.

need to control not only the posts of the subordinate bureaucracy, but also those civil institutions which supported overall networks of local influence. The police, like the subordinate bureaucracy, were also moulded 'by patterns of local dominance' and potentially able to apply caste and kinship connections within the force.[64] Again, this was a product of the financial weakness of the colonial state, which already depended on more informal methods at a provincial level, and in its need to watch budgets more carefully it increasingly relied upon a game of local cooperation.

The inadequacy of the police and army in a large province like UP meant that local magnates and landowners regularly sought recourse to private sources of muscle as a method of protecting their property.[65] This had two crucial implications for the politics of UP in the late colonial period. Firstly, it meant that in situations of 'communal' violence or riots the monopoly of violence in a local context might easily be held by a magnate or group of leading individuals.[66] Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the fact that individuals and groups could develop organisations for physical protection meant that political parties and communal organisations were also to develop institutions specifically designed to offer protection or intimidation for political purposes. This will be examined in the later chapters of the book in relation to the volunteer movements of the 1940s.

Colonial power as colonial knowledge affected other institutions parallel to the Congress, as well as the obvious communal ones. UP Congressmen tackled or took up colonial notions of religious community and, in a more subtle way, were affected by the state's notion of caste and the movements and institutions that the promotion of caste identity threw up. Official records charted 54,710 'sub-castes' within the two religious blocs in the province. Above these sub-groups were of course the main caste divisions numbering 240, although the relationship between the two levels in our period was not always clear-cut.[67] This emphasis on caste division by the colonial state served artificially to reinforce caste itself as a sociologically significant category.[68] The census was seen as one of the main instruments in this process of reinforcement, but curiously even census commissioners at the beginning of our period in UP

64 Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, *Imperial Power and Popular Politics: Class, Resistance and the State in India, c. 1850–1950* (Cambridge, 1998) p. 181.

65 *Ibid.*, pp. 182–3.

66 This will be demonstrated clearly in chapter 2 in the example of the Kanpur riot of March 1931.

67 D. C. Baillie, *Census of India, 1891*, vol. XVIII: *The North-Western Provinces and Awadh*, pt. III (Allahabad, 1894), p. iii.

68 Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, 2001), provides the clearest statement of this idea.

were not blind to the implications of their work.[69] The prevailing British view was that caste was the foundation of the Indian social fabric and undoubtedly this view did affect groups struggling to present themselves in caste, preferably 'higher'-caste, terms: 99.8 per cent of the 'Brahmanic Hindu population' of UP nominated one caste or another on their census returns, despite not being obliged to do so.[70]

At the same time, the employment of caste as a status marker was undergoing a radical shift in the early twentieth century, with jatis and caste sabhas aspiring to enhanced status. Caste could provide the bases of political institution-building and organisation and was not necessarily seen as the survival of an antiquated social system. In some areas of the province the Congress was not slow to pick up on this. In UP the 1920s and 1930s saw an increasing number of claims made by particular groups for higher status, often through the advocacy of a caste sabha. For example, the All-India Yadava Mahasabha in Julaun district asserted that Ahirs – an agricultural caste – should be known as Yadavs. In Banaras, Jaunpur and Ballia, Bhuinhars reportedly returned themselves as Brahmans. In the western part of the province the largest caste, Chamars, recorded themselves as Jatav or Jatav Rajput with the assistance of the All-India Shraddhanand Dalitudhar Sabha. Caste sabhas represented a new departure in caste association in the early twentieth century: not being tied into particular localities but working like political associations to which members paid a subscription. Many had representative assemblies and working committees. Most were concerned with the uplift of their particular community, education, the abolition of purdah and the reduction in expenditure on social and religious ceremonies.[71] Caste assertion in some instances was probably a response to census officials' almost macabre interest in the continuation of obscure caste practices amongst relatively small castes. Fines for 'misconduct with a young girl' were recorded for Bhantu, Sansia and Dom castes, and it was noted that Bhantus would claim Rs.30 from another party for the loss of a tooth.[72]

However, Congress activities in religious spaces and festivals in the 1930s did not obviously evoke caste imagery. It has been argued that in the late nineteenth century projects for the promotion of religious revivalism tended rather to reinforce broad Hindu–Muslim difference, often with a

[69] *Census of India, 1931, Report*, p. 533. It was noted by A. C. Turner that 'the caste return has been impugned by some who contend that it is likely to perpetuate by official action what they consider to be undesirable, *viz*, caste differentiation, and by others who think the returns are vitiated for demographic purposes by the attempts of the lower castes to return themselves as belonging to groups of higher status'.

[70] *Ibid.*, p. 532. [71] *Ibid.*, pp. 529–32; appendix B, pp. 551–2.

[72] *Ibid.*, appendix B, pp. 545–50.

corresponding diminishing of caste differentiation.[73] So too, in the 1920s and 1930s, UP political activity in the religious arena, particularly that associated with Congress, was rarely built upon the ostentatious assertion of caste identity. Such political activity encouraged broader and newer forms of identity politics, built upon symbols which sought to appeal across occupational and status categories and which positioned itself in relation to supposed Indian divisiveness.

UP Congress mobilisations in the cities in the 1930s, then, were marked by an effort to homogenise language and imagery associated with the nation. Central to this process of symbol selection was the experience of Hindu–Muslim conflict and the discourses produced by it in the 1920s. This decade started the most serious and frequent cases of 'communal' conflict in the entire colonial period. There were ninety-one reported serious Hindu–Muslim clashes in UP from 1923 to 1927 inclusive, an unprecedented number of riots and confrontations.[74] The vast majority of these 'disturbances' apparently related to the problem of music before mosques and cow slaughter. Yet somehow discussions about how this was a general Hindu–Muslim division with national implications became more common in the inter-war period. This idea that Hindu–Muslim communalism contained certain characteristics and followed particular patterns – music before mosques, cow slaughter or festival routes – was bolstered by colonial as well as Congress views. In a Legislative Assembly debate on 1 September 1926 about the possibility of the regulation of religious festivals, Alexander Muddiman made the comment that in the past such disputes were 'particular', related to a particular mosque or locality. Now, according to Muddiman, the particular had been made general, and of importance to Hindus and Muslims all over India.[75]

Most work on communalism has taken this colonial view of Hindu–Muslim antagonism in the late colonial period at face value. The idea that such violence was generated by specific kinds of problems, which could be repeated and generalised for the subcontinent as a whole, has been accepted. But, by 1931, in the cities of Kanpur, Banaras and Agra, for example, riots could be driven by real political controversies – in these cases Congress cloth picketing and civil disobedience. It is therefore more interesting to see how communal conflict was driven, represented and re-represented by political controversies that did not immediately relate to religious identity. This book argues throughout that communalism itself

[73] *Ibid.*, pp. 454–6.
[74] 'Statement of communal riots in the UP between 1922 and 1927', in Public and Judicial Department Records, L/PJ/6/1890 IOR.
[75] 'Legislative Assembly Resolutions: 24 August 1926 and 1 September 1926, regarding the regulation of religious festivals', L/PJ/6/1890 IOR.

became a mode of political communication: discussion and representation of communal conflict helped to shape how different groups identified themselves politically. This occurred through spheres such as education and the press, where broader political controversies were played out. As will be seen in the following pages, these included political representation, language debates and educational policy. In the context of the global violence of the 1940s, the meaning of communalism shifted still further away from an obvious matter of religious difference, and had much more to do with the ability of political parties to mobilise military force.

This book argues that this widening of communalism as a phenomenon in public life was encouraged by Congress leaders' symbolic representations of the national polity. Education policy and educational institutions were one point of entry for communal controversy. At the broadest level, this manifested itself in discussions in the late colonial period about how far the content of educational schemes strove to maintain religious neutrality and to represent the 'modern' values of secular citizenship. This was a debate that not only divided whole institutions, but created discord within management bodies.[76] Disagreements about Annie Besant and the Theosophists' involvement in the organisation of Banaras Hindu University revolved around religious differences as well as personal animosity.[77] In a broader sense, by the 1920s and 1930s it was acknowledged that particular institutions served the interests of and even politically 'represented' religious communities. From its beginning, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh was described as a 'political organisation' in all but name, and 'the arena in which Muslim opinion was created and UP Muslim leadership assembled'.[78] The subsequent Muslim university campaign of 1911, although dressed up as a purely educational project to gain official support, was also represented as a political movement. It was driven by communal rivalry in the reformed councils after 1909 and the news that the 'Hindus' were planning a denominational university.[79] In the late 1930s, accusations of communal bias in an ostensibly secular educational project were raised by representatives

[76] Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century Punjab* (Berkeley, 1976), pp. 90–3. The Kangri Gurukul of Munshi Ram, the fruit of a split within the Dayananand Anglo-Vedic Management Committee, had been the product of such a debate between 1889 and 1893. Here the argument was over the extent to which the educational programme of the proposed colleges should adopt elaborate schemes for a more religion-based education, involving Sanskrit, Hindi and Vedic studies.

[77] Parmanand, *Mahamana Madan Mohan Malaviya: An Historical Biography* (Varanasi, 1985) pp. 216–18.

[78] Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces Muslims 1860–1923* (Cambridge, 1973) p. 125.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 200.

of the UP Muslim League against the Congress's Wardha scheme of education.[80]

The tendency for education to be viewed in terms of separate religious denominations reached down to the primary level and had its impact on the village. The principal of Christchurch College, Kanpur, headed a committee to enquire into primary education in Moradabad district and came to the conclusion that there was a great deal of evidence for the desire for religious instruction. Muslims were reportedly calling for Islamic schools and Hindus increasingly for pathshalas (schools or seminaries).[81] This was supported independently by reports by Indian inspectors of schools and the Director of Public Instruction, who linked the problem of Muslim claims for instruction in Urdu to the political control by district and municipal boards on appointments. The report of the chairman of the Agra district board went so far as to advocate the substitution of 'civics' for 'history', since 'The study of Indian History tends to revive memories of tyrannies and oppressions perpetrated by Muhammadans on Hindus during the Muhammadan period, and to create communal tension.'[82]

The supposed differences between Hindu and Muslim education were hardened by the publication of official views. The repeated reference in government reports and the English press to the problems of a dissatisfied and undereducated student body in India promoted research into the roots of student political activity.[83] It was believed that radical nationalism and 'revolutionary terrorism' had partly resulted from a reaction to 'the excessive Westernisation of the country, and the subsequent denationalisation of the people' which ultimately related to dissatisfaction with Macaulay's Minute of nearly one hundred years' standing.[84] This dissatisfaction was linked to the inadequacy of vernacular teaching in some institutions and justified movements for the promotion of Hindi. From here it was a small step for official opinion to make the assumption that the driving spirit behind both student unrest and moves for vernacular education in north India was 'Hindu'. When Purushottam Das Tandon, Algu Rai Shastri, Krishna Dutt Paliwal or Sampurnanand

[80] See chapter 5.

[81] Report of Reverend Canon Crosthwaite to 'Proceedings of the Committee appointed, May 1927, to make recommendations for improving the administration of vernacular education by district boards' in Hartog Collection, MSS.EUR.E.221/42 IOR.

[82] Report of H. R. Harrop, Director of Public Instruction UP, 22 August 1928; Report of Raja Bahadur Krishal Pal Singh, chairman of Agra district board, in Hartog Collection, MSS.EUR.E.221/42 IOR.

[83] See *The Times Educational Supplement* 3 January, 17 January and 30 January 1931.

[84] Speech of Lord Zetland in the House of Lords, reported in *The Times Educational Supplement*, 19 February 1931.

called upon students to 'serve the motherland', then, the sense that such activity broadly represented the Hindu community could be hardened as a result of educational debates.

In the inter-war period religious community was rendered an important site of public political contestation in periodicals and journals. Newspaper publicity, and the symbolism it employed, created and re-created communal stereotypes.'Communal' controversy, as the early journalistic career of Muhammad Ali who publicised the Kanpur mosque dispute of 1913 demonstrates, was sensational and sold newspapers, causing periodicals to rise and fall. For example, *Arti*, a Hindi daily from Lucknow, which reached a high circulation of 3,000, was started specifically in response to communal disputes centred around Aminabad Park in the city. The *Arya Mitra*, a Hindi weekly published from Agra, served as the organ of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, which sought to promote shuddhi and the uplifting of the depressed class. The *Bharat Bhol* was supported by the Rishikesh fund to further agitation over a temple in Dehra Dun. Caste-based journals were also common, such as the *Kshattriya*, set up to support social reform amongst the Jats of Meerut, the *Kashbala Kshattriya Mitra*, which promoted the interests of the Koeri community and the *Jatava* of Agra, which supported the interests of 'untouchables'.[85] The ease with which newspapers could be attached to such specific communal or caste viewpoints connects with the nature of journal finance and organisation. By the 1920s it was quite common for powerful patrons to finance the journalistic projects of publicists and editors, with the aim of furthering an individual agenda. This meant that the content of papers in this period was directly linked to the nature of political contacts at district, provincial and national levels.

It has been argued that the volume of communal tracts increased from 1930. Half of the banned printed matter in the period of 1933–5 dealt with religious controversy.[86] Yet, as will be argued in the following chapters, the line between religious rhetoric and assertions of cross-communal nationalism could be very fine. A glance at a selection of the publications proscribed by the Government of India clearly illustrates how the poetic idiom of the Vedic mantra, and other forms of religious imagery, commonly acted as a front for anti-colonial propaganda. This style of writing was fluid in its application, appearing in a variety of different contexts, including journals and papers otherwise associated with non-sectarian movements. So, in the early 1930s, papers such as *Aj*, *Pratap* and even

[85] 'Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published in U.P., 1924', Home Poll. F.204/IV/25 1925, NAI.

[86] N. G. Barrier, *Banned Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India* (Columbia, 1974), pp. 113–15.

Vartman – those associated perhaps most clearly with leftist or a secular Congress position – also partook of religious imagery.[87]

The themes and scope of the work

Education, press organs, methods of mobilisation and demonstrations of violence – all channels through which a nationalist and Hindu imagery were presented – made up the political milieu of the UP Congress politician. As the curious mixture of symbols in the UP press demonstrates, the languages of these politicians revealed a complicated, sometimes paradoxical, relationship with religious idioms. This book examines language, political symbolism and imagery in the context of political events. It therefore looks at ideas, languages and oral and textual evidence as the stuff of UP Congress nationalism. It then tries to explain how those political voices pertained to ideas about the Hindu nation. Cutting across the analysis of political languages are other recurrent themes: communal violence and its connection to broader political controversies; social and religious reform; and the relationship between Congressmen and other political and state institutions.

Chapters 2 and 3 identify forms of religious symbolism in the rhetoric, language and activities of Congress personnel and institutions: Congress sadhus, rhetorical devices in speeches and political protests and the adoption of themes such as ritual pollution and cow protection. Chapter 3 links these languages of politics in the Congress to specific movements, in particular the foreign cloth boycotts and Gandhi's 'harijan' or untouchable uplift campaign. Poor Muslim support for the mass movements of civil disobedience partly related to these forms of nationalist symbolism. This had implications for the late 1930s. In chapter 6, connections are identified between general Muslim reactions to Congress's political symbolism and more specific Muslim League propaganda, which focused on Congress as a 'Hindu' party.

These specific reactions of Muslim League publicists to the Congress in UP right into the 1940s were based on the apparent connections between Congress and communal organisations. Of all Hindu organisations in UP in the 1930s, perhaps Congress's closest ties were with the Arya Samaj. Chapter 4 analyses this relationship, looking particularly at

[87] In 1930, *Aj*, the Hindi daily of Banaras, had a circulation of about 5,000, and was owned by Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta and edited by Babu Rao Vishnu Prasad. *Pratap*, published in Kanpur, had a relatively massive circulation of 16,000 in the same year and was edited by Prakash Narain Shiromani. *Vartman* was also a Kanpur paper, with a circulation of about 4,000, owned by Rama Shankar Avasthi and edited by Durga Dutt Pandey. 'Newspapers and Periodicals Published during 1930', L/R/5/102 IOR.

the sharing of political infrastructure and links between educational ideals and institutions. Some of the explanations for the Congress–Samaj relationship are highlighted in the politics of key Congress personalities in chapter 5. In particular, the activities of two high-level Congress publicists – Sampurnanand and P. D. Tandon – are examined. Both leaders advocated sanskritised Hindi and maintained relationships with organisations regarded as 'communal' into the 1940s. What is most illuminating about Sampurnanand and Tandon is their simultaneous advocacy of Congress socialism alongside a self-consciously 'Hindu' view of the nation. This composite nationalism forces the historian to reconsider assumptions that religio-political mobilisation was necessarily only advocated by the Congress right.

P. D. Tandon was an enthusiastic patron of volunteer movements, and it is here that 'sub'-Congress institutions at local levels overlapped institutionally with communal bodies. The final sections of chapters 5 and 7 examine the escalation of communal polarisation through the growing militarisation of volunteer activity. This phenomenon quickly achieved its own momentum. Chapters 6 and 7 investigate how the polarisation of popular politics along communal lines, itself informed by increased militarisation, affected UP's diverse Muslim community. Right up to the 1940s, Muslim support for the Congress in the shape of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Shia Political Conference and Ahrars, an anti-colonial Muslim Nationalist group, remained fluid, suggesting the need for a more thorough analysis of the reasons for Congress's continued association with communal controversy. The contention that the Muslim mass contacts campaign foundered on the 'lack of interest' of Hindu nationalist elements is examined in more detail by looking at the effect of Congress's nationalist symbolism from the late 1930s.

Hindu nationalism, as it manifested itself in political language in the 1930s and 1940s, was a much more widespread force than historians have hitherto supposed. It was symbolically represented in the activities and rhetoric of political operators across a spectrum of classes and political affiliations within the Congress. The estrangement of Muslims from the Congress, or the building of Muslim separatist movements, are not of course explained away as the inevitable consequences of these political languages. But Muslim voices played an important part in identifying, even characterising, the idea of the 'Hindu' in the UP Congress. This was, after all, a period in which ideas about the nation were being worked out. That nation was taking shape within the fast-moving and unpredictable context of an empire in crisis and retreat. Politicians' struggles with how the Indian nation might accommodate religious identities were part of early attempts to formulate debates about secularism. But nothing

was fixed in these debates. The very chaotic nature of the Indian political experience in the 1930s and 1940s threw up a huge diversity of political voices, which movements like the Congress were obliged to accommodate. Yet, in the confusion, the chameleon-like institution lost its ability and claim in the mid-1940s to represent all religious communities. It is this problem – how the Congress, for a time and for some, became the 'Hindu Congress' – that runs through this book.

2 Congress and the Hindu nation: symbols, rhetoric and action

In attempting to investigate the nature and operation of symbolic communication in north India, it is useful to locate a historical point at which local and national politics intersected. In Uttar Pradesh, one such moment of intersection was the urban and rural protests of 1930–4. The civil disobedience movement of this period is regarded as the second period of mass nationalist protest in India, following the non-cooperation of 1920–2. It was built upon long and careful preparation throughout 1929.[1] Civil disobedience aimed to create mass enthusiasm for the nation and the propagation of the main political issue of 'purna swaraj' (perfect freedom) was achieved in practice by the transformation of local protests on the basis of an India-wide nationalist symbolism. This symbolism and nationalist imagery were an answer to the political divergence of differentiated local and provincial interest groups. The salt tax issue was the first and most famous example, but throughout 1930–4 other symbolic themes arose as part of a planned campaign which linked the activities of district Congress workers with negotiations at the centre. Localised disputes and grievances were harnessed, facilitated by the effects of economic depression.[2] Congress workers in UP visited pockets of rural and urban discontent, where specific complaints were varied – ranging from disputes over landownership or rents to licences for markets or processions. The tactics used to harness local grievances very often aimed to restrain and check as much as to develop militancy.[3]

[1] For the Congress, 1929 was the 'year's grace' given to the British government to concede dominion status after the visit of the Simon Commission in 1928, failing which the Congress would work for 'purna swaraj'. The Lahore Congress session of December 1929 fulfilled this promise and was followed by mass civil disobedience from March 1930. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947* (London, 1983), pp. 281–2.

[2] Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, pp. 39–44. This was a common view of officials. One administrator described the crux of the situation as 'the deliberate attempt of a large number of Congress volunteers . . . to exploit the economic situation'. Stewart to Crerar, 2 May 1931, Stewart Papers MSS.EUR.D.890/9 IOR.

[3] Sumit Sarkar, *'Popular' Movements and 'Middle Class' Leadership: Perspectives and Problems of a 'History from Below'* (Calcutta, 1983).

It will be seen in this chapter that this restraint was also achieved through the manipulation of political symbolism. Frequently, the symbolism used in the rhetoric of politicians actually bore little relation to localised grievances themselves. Instead it appealed to an emotive identification with the nation. Popular activity was thereby imbued with a 'nationalist' dimension mainly through the skilful articulation of specific grievances using a generalised language and imagery, incorporating selected ideological characteristics, some of which were derived from ideas about Hinduism.[4] On the other hand, it will be seen that the 'Hindu' idiom within Congress's language was often a reinterpretation as well as an adaptation of popular attitudes towards the role of religion in politics.[5] Within this idiom, then, it is possible to identify a range of languages, some of them the product of a dialogue between local and national symbolic elements. The inter-relationship between these symbols depended upon the nature of locality – provincial political relationships, as well as the specific context of agent–audience participation. Because the range of symbols employed in this Hindu idiom was broad, the overall meaning of political utterances, and their environmental context, could be flexible.

There were practical reasons why the use of religious rhetoric, and, specifically, a kind of Hindu religious rhetoric, should have been favoured by Congress publicists, since it enhanced the flexibility of Congress agents in town mobilisation. The term 'Hindu', although a confusing and ambiguous term, as has been already stated, was also a broad description for an identifiable human collectivity, which possessed a specific sense of geographical location. Symbols of the supernatural could bind groups in other moments of perceived collective danger – occupation by a foreign power or perceived destruction of a native culture. But national symbolism also required the invention of a schema of traditions and myths which would set India and its peoples apart from the rest of the world.[6] A plethora of symbols pertaining to India's physical features, drawn upon by epics and legends, already existed within the folklore of the Hindi belt. A dominant symbolic resource for Congress agents was derived from the characteristics of the UP region – a resource which, as will be seen below, cut across both national and local traditions. Geographical

[4] The 'subaltern studies' writers shift the emphasis away from the ideological construction of elites towards consideration of subaltern autonomy. Of course, different groups of Indians responded to Congress activities in very specific ways. The differential impact of Congress ideas on varying Indian localities is a subject which still requires more research. R. Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies*, vol. I: *Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi, 1982), pp. 167–97.

[5] Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*, pp. 324–40.

[6] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth and Reality* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 46.

features such as the Ganga and the Sangam at Allahabad were widely believed to have a spiritual significance. The area coterminous with UP contained a relatively large number of these features. The western part of the Ganga plain, including the Doab, was considered to be the cultural heart of India. This was the region known as 'Aryavarta', the land of classical Aryan life. From ancient times, peaks in the central Himalayas had been centres of pilgrimage, in particular Kailasa, the mountain of Siva. The Ganga river was believed to have flowed over the sky in the form of the Milky Way and then fallen to earth from the matted locks of Siva. Both the Ganga and the Yamuna were personified as goddesses in their own right.[7] One of the most important 'Hindu' cities was located in the province: Banaras – a centre connected for two and a half millennia with religious pilgrimage.[8] The UP region of India was also a centre of Muslim rule and civilisation, represented by the cities of Jaunpur, Agra, Faizabad and Lucknow.[9] The geographical co-existence of these two cultures made the type of nationalist symbolism adopted by the Congress crucial for the politics of religious community.

The description of India's traditions as 'Hindu' revealed an obsession with a search for 'foundations' and origins. This was a set of discourses and notions of community which looked essentially to the national, yet still related to symbolic characteristics of the UP region. The early twentieth century was crucial in other contexts for the invocation of foundation myths, which were then used to describe the essential 'character' of a people. In the north Balkan region – another area where peoples struggled to assert their essential homogeneity and single, simplified origins form a position of political weakness – an oversimplified reading of ancient history was used. Thus, the Romanian people were interchangeably associated by historians with either Roman or indigenous Dacian origins.[10] For north Indian nationalists, also positioning themselves against established western European states, the myth of original 'Hindu' nations and peoples, intimately tied to the physical characteristics of the land, was an obvious strategy for combating a sense of ethnic complexity, and through that complexity a sense of national inferiority.

The incorporation of Hindu religious symbolism into political discourse in the twentieth century was varied, but there were particular

7 A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India; A Survey of the History and Culture of the Indian Sub-Continent before the Coming of the Muslims* (London, 1967), p. 322. Sir Charles Eliot, diplomat and orientalist, said of Hinduism that 'it smacks of the soil and nothing like it can be found outside India'. Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford, 1990), p. 87.

8 Diana L. Eck, *Banaras, City of Light* (London, 1983), pp. 4–5.

9 Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, p. 11.

10 For an excellent survey of this historiography in the case of Romania, read Lucian Boia, *Romania: Borderland of Europe* (London, 2001), pp. 28–53.

features drawing on both popular devotional practices and brahmanical ideas. In his study of Surat during the period of the non-cooperation movement, Douglas Haynes has identified the 'infusion into civic discourse of the potent terminology of devotional Hinduism'. The use of metaphors which described religious duties and practices as well as the Hindu epics were used to transform the whole basis of political discourse.[11] Haynes's analysis must be placed in the context of Gujarat in the early 1920s, a time when political mobilisation also occurred along the lines of the caste organisations of the Patidars. But the political rhetoric and use of metaphor in the early 1930s in UP bear a striking resemblance to Gujarat in 1920–2. Indeed, a central question of the first part of this book is how the methods of the early 1920s survived in UP well into the 1930s, despite the devastation caused by severe communal rioting between 1923 and 1931 and the on-going stress on the secular nature of Congress nationalism.

As well as a mixed content of devotional and brahmanical traditions, which had a reference point in other parts of India, there was a historical complexity to the origins of Congress's Hindu idiom. The significance of religious discourses and particularly discourses about Hinduism within political rhetoric appeared well before the non-cooperation movement. Late nineteenth-century Hindu revivalism provided one root, particularly the activities of Bharatendu Harischandra in UP. Harischandra, as has already been mentioned, was a great patron of the Hindi language, and he established direct connections between what he described as the 'Hindu community', inhabitants of the UP region and the Hindi language through the broadening of Hindi literature so that it reached a middle-class audience.[12] Amongst the nationalist 'extremists' – B. G. Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghose – there was discussion of the 'Hindu' community in terms of the nation as a whole. For these men religion was the natural paradigm for describing the nation. In the booklet *Bhawani Mandir*, attributed to Aurobindo Ghose, it was declared that 'India must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal religion which is to harmonize all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul.' Gandhi once justified his attachment to Hinduism by stating that there was enough room within it for Christianity and Islam.[13] Congress spokesmen in the UP

[11] Douglas E. Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual in Colonial India: The Shaping of a Public Culture in Surat City, 1852–1928* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 220–1.

[12] Dalmia, *The Nationalisation of Hindu Traditions*, p. 225.

[13] Amaury De Reincourt, *The Soul of India* p. 302; Girilal Jain, (New York, 1960), *The Hindu Phenomenon* (New Delhi, 1994), pp. 14–18. Jain contends that Hinduism is not a religion at all but a 'civilisation', since Hindus accept no division between believer and unbeliever. There are as many paths to the godhead as there are human

likewise claimed that whilst Hinduism contained elements of religiosity, its meaning could be universally acceptable.[14]

Although the Hindu Sabhas of the 1910s and 1920s clearly articulated the idea of a Hindu community,[15] religiously informed nationalism at this stage was not necessarily exclusivist. Members of the revolutionary societies in the 1900s made good use of a mythological history in which pre-British days were pictured as a golden age.[16] Tilak often drew upon religious texts, particularly the *Bhagavad Gita*, as a basis for his political extremism.[17] Tilak's combination of religious principles based upon the *Gita* foreshadowed 1930s' Congressmen's manipulation of spiritual values, both in Gandhi's own politics and more widely in UP. And the Congress drew upon them to differing degrees. The association of texts and the epics with nationalist organisation and the building of a 'modern' nation-state was therefore not a novel creation of the 1920s or 1930s. However, the 1930s was certainly unique in the degree to which this invocation of the 'Hindu', hitherto belonging exclusively to elites, now had resonance more broadly within UP society.

The UP Congress inherited rather than invented, then, a tendency within Indian political thought for using religious imagery to describe the nation. Old religious symbols continued to appear in quite a different political context. This disjunction was to affect and transform the meaning of the Hindu idiom too. The associations of early Congressmen with Hindu revival had been partly responsible for poor Muslim attendance at all-India sessions from the 1890s onwards.[18] What was significantly

beings and so Hindus have no problem in accepting the legitimacy of Christianity and Islam. However, insofar as Hinduism has been historically perceived as a religion by Hindus themselves, it has acquired attributes of a religion, despite its purest metaphysical meaning.

[14] Perhaps most surprising are the assertions of Jawaharlal Nehru in *Discovery of India* (Calcutta, 1945), which stress the idea of the ultimate toleration of Hinduism over other faiths and cultures. A different form of this argument touched the thinking of Sampurnanand, P. D. Tandon and Mahabir Tyagi, who saw Hinduism as a tool for national integration (see chapter 5). A more sectarian formulation of this view of Hinduism is seen in the Hindu Mahasabha meeting of 1923 in Banaras, in which it was claimed that the widest definition of Hinduism should be adopted, so as to include Sikhism and Buddhism. *Leader* (Allahabad), 2 August 1923.

[15] *Leader* (Allahabad), 2 August 1923.

[16] Sarkar, *Modern India 1885–1947*, pp. 72–6.

[17] Mark J. Harvey, 'The Secular as Sacred? The Religio-Political Rationalization of B. G. Tilak,' *Modern Asian Studies* 20, 2 (1986), pp. 321–31; De Reincourt, *The Soul of India*, p. 301. Tilak wrote: 'The most practical teaching of the *Gita*, and one for which it is of abiding interest and value to the men of the world with whom life is a series of struggles, is not to give way to any morbid sentimentality when duty demands sternness and the boldness to face terrible things.'

[18] Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 298–340; Gordon Johnson, *Provincial Politics and Indian Nationalism: Bombay and the Indian National Congress 1880–1915* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 83–93.

new about the Congress of the 1930s was the degree to which religious imagery could be employed whilst maintaining an outward political ideology of secularism. The use of religious symbolism was not necessarily attached to what would be western conceptions of sectarian religious community. Writers on later constructions of Congress secularism have described this phenomenon as 'majoritarianism' – a unique definition of secularism, which is contained within Hindu majority assumptions about the nation.[19] In this manifestation of secular nationalism, religion becomes a flexible ideological tool. The Congress and its spokespersons were blissfully unaware in many situations in the early 1930s that potential political rivals would attach a more sectarian interpretation of this natural religiosity to Congress's actions.

This made the incorporation of religious symbolism both attractive for the politician and of lasting danger to the integrity of the Congress as a party. UP Congressmen and their agents must have employed this symbolism for specific reasons. Firstly, conceiving of the nation in religious terms, or creating national enthusiasm through religion, added drama and appeal to the Congress's political programme. The supremacy of India as a nation could be described using the emotive and divine activities of the heroes of the epics. Secondly, the institutional and conceptual forms of religion in India provided an established framework for the nationalist-publicist. This space linked intimately to the forms of symbolism employed, which, in its emphasis on the widest interpretations of 'Hindu tradition', encouraged the use of varied religious environments. Festivals and temples offered physical spaces for propaganda. Ideas about ritual pollution could be exploited to sanction and discipline mass movements, as well as to form an overlap between public civic ideas and private worship.[20] This was attempted in the repeatedly connected themes of cow fat and foreign cloth. Thirdly, and most importantly, religious imagery and emphasis on the nation's spirituality generally were still effective means of demonising foreign rulers. The degradation of India's people was frequently related to 'western civilisation'. In this theory, the surest way out of material, cultural and political disempowerment was through a theoretical and practical preservation of India's 'ancient culture'.[21] This brings us back to the use of foundational myths – of the sense of Hindu homogeneity to assert India's historical continuity as a single national unit. Although these motivations are apparent in most of the cases with which this book is concerned, the construction and meaning of this symbolism

19 Upadhyaya, 'The Politics of Indian Secularism', pp. 815–53.
20 Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual*, p. 226.
21 *Leader* (Allahabad), 13 January 1930. Book review of Bose, Pramatha Nath, *Swaraj – Cultural and Political* (Calcutta, 1930).

was far more complex – being based on an interplay of overlapping languages of politics. These languages were not always simply concerned with the straightforward depiction of religiosity – a situation which will become evident in the examples which follow.

The processes outlined above had far-reaching consequences. For many observers, describing the nation in religious terms was a specifically 'Hindu' project, which deliberately aimed to capture a popular sense of 'Hindu-ness'. There are differing interpretations about agency in Congress's use of religion: was the appearance of popular motifs the result of a grassroots recasting of nationalist ideas, or was nationalist rhetoric driven from above, by district and town Congress leaders? It has been suggested that the tensions within Hindu society created an elitist reconstruction of popular religion.[22] It was certainly the case that Congress's religious rhetoric could operate on multiple levels, representing very disparate and localised interpretations of the nation. But, in this relationship between elite and popular levels, it is not necessarily useful to ascertain direct agency. If the meaning of Congress symbolism was the result of a range of overlapping symbolic influences, derived from participation and authorship, the role of the initial agent can be misleading. What is more significant is that the intentions of Congress agents could be transformed by the overall symbolic meaning of a Congress movement. This helps us to begin to understand how other communities then perceived the variants of Congress nationalism as a single 'Hindu' discourse.

The implications of these political languages for Muslims and Christians are the next obvious line of enquiry. From the perspective of these communities (although their responses were as varied as the communities themselves were heterogeneous), the 'natural' elements of India's religious life had been lumped together with the nebulous term 'Hinduism' by both colonial and nationalist insititutions. Congress activity therefore also appeared to be self-consciously 'Hindu'. Although Hinduism could be described as a 'civilisation' and incorporated into an essentially inclusive nationalist rhetoric by Congressmen, those outside the Congress fold viewed it differently. Official and non-official projects, which categorised religion in India in terms of discrete communities, made it difficult not to derive sectarian understandings from even a catholic pronouncement about Hinduism. A contributing factor here was that Congress notions of Hindu universalism were still set up as

[22] D. Hardiman, 'The Crisis of the Lesser Patidars: Peasant Agitations in the Kheda District, Gujarat, 1917–1934', in D. A. Low, ed., *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917–1947* (New Delhi, 1977), pp. 47–75 ; Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual.*

a framework by which foreign influences in the subcontinent could be demonised. Highlighting Hindu 'culture and civilisation' allowed leaders to emphasise the unnatural quality of foreign rule in India whilst playing lip-service to a broad range of symbolic influences. The fact that Hinduism was interpreted as a geographically distinct, but 'inclusive' civilisation as well as a religion, made the boundaries of true 'Indianness' appear to be more defined to outsiders than they were in the minds of those espousing Hindu catholicity. Congress spokesmen continually reiterated the universal, multireligious aspect of nationhood, but simultaneously used more limited notions of Hinduism to highlight the differences between India and the west. The paradoxical result was a theoretically 'inclusive' nationalist rhetoric which, despite its attempt to use the all-embracing qualities of a Hindu past, effectively excluded non-Hindus. The stigma of foreign rule consequently fell upon groups other than the British who were unable to perceive themselves as part of the ancient culture and religion of India.

The complexities and contradictions of this situation are immediately apparent. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s important Muslim groups continued to support the Congress in UP – the Ahrars, Jamiat-ul-Ulema, Firangi Mahal and the Khaksars. Congress had good Muslim support amongst the intelligentsia in Deoband, in Saharanpur and, in the early 1930s, in Meerut City. Yet Muslim descriptions of the Congress as a 'Hindu party' were still common. Congress's religious image was therefore delicate and subtle. Its members were able, in various ways, to espouse the mainstream secularist arguments, whilst still paying lip-service to forms of religious imagery. Muslim support, as we shall see, always hung in a delicate balance and related to Congress's relationship with religious pronouncements and activity. The most obvious example of this was to be seen in the later 1930s and 1940s when Muslim League accusations of Mahasabhaite tendencies in the Congress were an increasingly compelling argument in Muslim constituencies.[23]

Congress's theoretical constructions of the Indian nation had a relatively significant bearing on Muslim approaches to the party and were a primary contributory factor to eventual Muslim estrangement.[24] It is problematic and hazardous to isolate the effect of political ideology upon

[23] Mukul Kesavan, 'Communal Politics in the United Provinces, 1936–1947', unpublished M. Litt. thesis, University of Cambridge, pp. 5–20; Mushirul Hasan, in contrast, highlights the consistency of Muslim support for the Congress in towns like Lucknow and Allahabad, by focusing on left-wing politics. Mushirul Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contacts Campaign: An Attempt at Political Mobilization', *Economic and Political Weekly* 21, 27 (December 1986), pp. 2273–80.

[24] Congress's use of religious symbolism obviously had importance for all communities and was noticed by Congress socialists attempting to radicalise the organisation. Jawaharlal

political behaviour. Discrete social and economic explanations for Muslim alienation from the Congress in different phases leading to independence in UP emphasise the long-term decline of an Urdu-speaking elite and the rising political strength of urban-based high-caste Hindus. Yet in very few cases of decisive Hindu–Muslim cleavage on political issues can social or economic explanations provide a full answer. Neither do they account for the pattern and nature of Muslim reactions to the Congress in the province. These reactions were repeatedly provoked by the symbolism of Congress's protests. Moreover, Congress's use of a Hindu idiom in a variety of different contexts also served to dissolve the social, religious and cultural boundaries between Muslims, strengthening the artificially homogeneous Muslim reaction to that form of nationalism.[25]

What is really surprising for the historian of the Congress is the degree to which politicians failed to recognise the destructive implications of ideological relationships with Hindu nationalism. For many Congressmen religion and spiritualism were conceptually separated from ideas of 'community' and 'communalism'. The failure of Congressmen in UP to appreciate that the use of a religious idiom and communalism might easily be confused by others meant that the appropriateness of religion's place in politics was never sufficiently questioned. This lack of awareness also linked to the composite and dialogic nature of the religious idiom, which allowed participants to represent religious symbols in terms of a 'secular' civic consciousness. But, from the early 1920s, religious violence had been transformed in extent and nature. The experience of the Hindu–Muslim riots in the 1920s had created an awareness of how communalism could be detrimental to a broad-based nationalist movement. Individuals associated with Congress used religious spaces, organisation and religious rhetoric to great effect, but this was in most instances not associated with the taboo of 'communalism'. Leaders like Gandhi displayed

Nehru often related 'communalism' within the Congress to the dominance of 'middle-class' elements. 'Jawaharlal's Presidential Address, Lucknow, 12 April 1936', *Indian Annual Register*, vol. I (Calcutta, 1936), pp. 271–5.

25 The idea of a 'single' Muslim community was as misleading as that of a Hindu community. It had been created, perhaps even more clearly than in the Hindu case, by imperial systems of knowledge – most notably the Hunter Commission. This assumed that the educational backwardness of Bengali Muslims could be applied to other provinces. Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, pp. 300–8. Later, in the search for collaborators, British officials frequently talked of courting 'the Muslims'. There was a kind of official language to describe the Indian Muslim community, who were said to possess a 'curious inherited strain of sensuality which so often explains their contradictions and their instability', Meston to Hardinge, 25 March 1915, Hardinge Papers, Cambridge University Library. However, there was a sense in which Congress nationalism, through its relationship with Hindu nationalist ideologies, contributed to this process of homogenisation.

in their actions a belief that the Hindu–Muslim conflicts like those of the 1920s had very little to do with religion at all.[26] It was the conceptual division between public communal conflict and 'private' religion (nevertheless incorporated into public life) that salvaged religion as a political tool. The tying of religious community to politics damaged hopes for a national consensus about India's future. In the form of separate or communal electorates, it negated prevailing ideas of democracy.[27] Most importantly, it allowed the British to argue that India was ill prepared for full responsible self-government.[28]

The employment of a religious idiom in political movements varied according to locality and the methods of the individual. In some cases it was simply a rhetorical tool. Publicists adapted their methods to the audience and the use of symbolism in propaganda reflected the fluidity of the political context. Naturally, it was a political method that appeared mainly in the arena of large-scale mobilisation rather than in personal correspondence, and was consciously perceived as a means for appealing to large audiences. It was not an intellectualised ideology for most Congress leaders in UP, but was regarded as something inherent in the political environment. In some cases, then, we are dealing less with ideology than with political language. However, there were key Congressmen who did conceptualise and write about the use of religious notions in political mobilisation. As will be seen in chapter 5, one might represent these writings as forms of ideology. But, because they subsequently

[26] One of Gandhi's objections to the Communal Award scheme of 1932 involved the granting of separate electorates to untouchables. His subsequent campaign for the welfare of 'harijans' involved work to improve untouchables' religious rights within the fold of Hinduism. Here Gandhi was actively setting religion against what he perceived to be an attempt at organised communalism (separate representation). Indeed, religion was used as a sort of remedy for it, with no real anticipation that attempts to draw untouchables into the Hindu fold itself might be perceived as a communal act. This will be explored in chapter 3.

[27] Congress's ambivalent attitude towards separate electorates for Muslims was extremely complex. The argument for maintaining a unified 'body politic' under a democratic system was an ideological commitment. But it could also be seen as a form of majoritarianism associated with the Hindu Mahasabha. See the speech by Pant on 28 March 1938 in B. R. Nanda, ed., *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant,* vol. VIII (Oxford, 1994), pp. 108–117. Whilst the Congress–Mahasabha similarities over separate electorates were ambiguous, they were noticed by UP Muslims. This meant that other, purely secular Congress defences of non-communal electorates could be construed as a 'Hindu' style of politics. What is interesting is that this assumption too was informed by a general nationalist imagery that incorporated Hindu symbolism.

[28] This helps to explain the attitude of Congress leaders such as Motilal Nehru in the 1928 'Nehru Report' – the fruit of the All-Parties Conference. Here, the principle that national independence should precede consideration of communal or 'minority' issues was articulated – suggesting that minority claims were a product of imperial rule, and would be naturally solved with complete independence. *Leader* (Allahabad), 9 May 1930.

affected political policy and action in UP, they also interacted with the looser and more fluctuating political languages of civil disobedience and later popular mobilisations.

The UP Congress's direct association with organisations such as the Hindu Sabha waned as the 1930s progressed. However, Congressmen's engagement with particular forms of political symbolism in the 1930s had a lasting effect on Congress's broad image. In the short term this helped to determine non-Congress reactions to the cloth boycott and the untouchable uplift campaigns of 1931 and 1932. In the longer term, it affected critiques of the Congress in the late 1930s and 1940s. That this situation lasted into this period is particularly surprising. By the time of the Muslim mass contacts movement in 1937, the Congress had become more sensitised to connections made by Muslims between religion and communalism. In a letter to Saksena, Dr Muhammad Ashraf, who co-ordinated the Muslim mass contacts movement, noted that it was necessary for Congressmen to be much more careful about having any kind of association with religious movements:

> I wonder if you have noticed that the Congress position regarding communal organizations and the communal activities of the Congress members has been dangerously vague until now. Most of us feel that we are free to confine ourselves in most of our activities to members of a particular denomination and as a result even social and religious movements, because of our participation, sometimes take a dangerously political colour. Of course one does not notice it in the beginning but the impression created on other communities is irresistible.[29]

The Congress's association with religious ideas and imagery in terms of political language can be divided into four main areas. Firstly, in the opening years of civil disobedience, the Congress was loosely and intermittently associated with 'holy men' and itinerant preachers. These can be variously described as sadhus, sanyasis and others with religious affiliations, including Muslim maulanas and maulvis.[30] During important phases of the civil disobedience movement, these individuals spread the Congress message to captive audiences at religious functions and gatherings. The employment of sadhus naturally imbued Congress ideas with a spiritual significance. In some cases religious groups and individuals spontaneously responded to civil disobedience, or made a comment on politics in regular religious speeches. This was not an official or concerted campaign on the part of Congress to use a corps of religious men.

[29] Ashraf to Saksena, 3 September 1937, AICC file 30/1937 NMML.
[30] Congress's relationship with the ulema of UP dated from the Khilafat movement of 1919–23. The Jamiat-ul-Ulema continued to provide Congress with backing well into the 1940s.

Yet the frequency with which Congress activities were associated with religious meetings and the activities of holy men suggests that informal connections existed. It was certainly the case that, in certain localities of UP such as Aligarh district, local leaders called upon the services of peripatetic religious speakers.

Secondly, Congress was able to reach large audiences *in situ* by targeting festivals, and using temples as meeting areas. On such occasions, Congress ideas often acquired a directly religious colour, or at least an association with particular religio-political movements. Rhetoric, symbol and political environment therefore interacted. Again, there was no coordinated plan on the part of the UP Congress as a whole to utilise the resources of festivals, although Congress's early 1930s' mass activity rose and fell with the timing of the religious calendar. In some cases, the incorporation of the message of religious functions and environments occurred against the intentions of Congress agents. In many cases, festivals and temples provided a political cover, or a haven within a repressive censorial state. The festival too might throw up some surprises for the reluctant political participant. Some Congress leaders were regarded as religious figures and leaders during festival-like mass movements, often against their own better intentions.

The third area was that of political rhetoric used by the Congress in UP. Religious themes provided ideal points of reference for publicists and Congress activists to both generate national enthusiasm and stigmatise foreign influences.[31] Characters from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were evoked as examples of national heroism. The British, and sometimes those outside the pale of Congress nationalism, were characterised as 'demons' or as Ravan in disguise. Most of this rhetoric drew upon popular and combative elements of Indian legend and religious texts, which aimed to encourage broad audience participation. The purpose and context of this symbolism also affected its character and its political effect. Religious imagery was sometimes nothing more than a vehicle for factual information, or the attempted creation of a national spirit. Yet whilst the dialogue between national, provincial and local traditions was evident in the imagery employed, its meaning was essentially transformed by the re-representations of parties outside the pale of the Congress. It is certainly possible to demonstrate that whatever the intentions of speakers using this imagery and symbolism, Congress practices were still regarded as 'Hindu' by outsiders. Although driven by defensive expediency, British views often interpreted the rhetoric of some Congressmen as 'Hindu' in inspiration, and in the early 1930s

[31] Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, pp. 11–79.

there were repeated references by officials in UP to the 'Hindu' nature of civil disobedience. The UP Governor, Hailey, described civil disobedience as 'a Hindu movement against foreign influences'.[32] The content of this rhetoric as a political language was therefore informed by Congress's dialogue with the colonial state as well as local institutions of communal mobilisation.

The fourth area of Congress's association with religion involved the use of ideas of ritual pollution and religious dogma to discipline followers. This will be analysed specifically in relation to the issue of cow slaughter and the use of animal fat and other 'pollutants'. The use of this kind of rhetoric was constrained by the nature of the gathering and region. Congressmen in localities such as Gorakhpur, for example, built upon a tradition of protest surrounding cow slaughter. By the 1930s, the idea of ritual pollution was used more widely across the province, sometimes recieving a small mention in speeches, or appearing as a major theme from which a political message could be produced. The intersection of ritual pollution with politics was to become an ideological element of the cloth-boycott propaganda, in urban as well as rural situations – a theme which will be developed in chapter 3.

The Congress and holy men

The relationship between the UP Congress organisation and sanyasis and sadhus in the first stages of civil disobedience had a specific origin in the Kumbh Mela and Magh Mela at Allahabad and Hardwar.[33] However, there is also evidence that itinerant preachers were informally employed to spread Congress propaganda in town and country. The reasons for this were both practical and ideological. Travelling holy men would have had a greater accessibility to north India's stratified society as a result of their own divorce from society through claims of total renunciation.[34]

[32] Hailey to Sir S. Findlater Stewart, 23 July 1930, Hailey Papers MSS.EUR.E220/19A IOR. At moments such as civil disobedience it was of course in the interests of the colonial state to treat the 'communal problem' as a national as well as a local phenomenon: 'we can't treat Hindu–Muslim tension as a purely provincial business. Release of 200 Prisoners from jails in the UP on occasion of the King's birthday', 3 June 1925, Home Department Pt.B file 423 1925 NAI.

[33] Earlier in the century, a range of other religious leaders involved in national politics had attempted to use the Congress as a platform – for example, Swami Shraddhananda, the Arya Samaj leader. The importance of religious festivals and melas to the Congress will be discussed in detail in the next section. J. T. F. Jordens, *Swami Shraddhanand: His Life and Causes* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 103–29. See also William Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India* (Berkeley, 1996).

[34] C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (Princeton, 1992), p. 31.

It was for the same reason that the colonial police had used holy men as native informants over previous decades. Their unusual appearance would have singled them out visually, increasing their chances as effective soap-box orators. Frequently living on the basis of charity, the financing of politically motivated tours could be carried out relatively easily and discreetly and sadhus' endorsements of the Congress could act in the manner of religious sanctions. In some instances, political propaganda was delivered through kathas, songs and poems, allowing nationalism to be merged with popular entertainment. The association of asceticism and renunciation with the lifestyle and methods of Gandhi also clearly helped to link local holy men to an all-India movement.[35]

The appearance of the sadhu as Congress agent tended to reinforce and add to the overall symbolic resonance of national imagery. The association with Gandhian asceticism allowed the operations of local itinerants to engage with a sense of the national. On the other hand, the sadhu could be quite clearly associated with local festivals and melas which linked to the Hindi belt or the religious cultures of specific towns. In the politics of the sadhu, then, we see a combination of political imagery which tied locality to nation through specific religious spaces and institutions. It was also through the sadhu that the 1930s' reworking of notions of ritual pollution associated with cloth and the sanctity of the cow was given a peculiar character. Yet the Congress holy man of the 1930s, although associated by the colonial state with the popular anti-colonial protest of earlier decades, was a dynamic political force. Political itinerancy had a different effect and meaning in the context of improved communications, a burgeoning Hindi press and a more developed party political structure.

It is clear that sadhus enhanced Congress's connections with some of the largest of UP's religious festivals. At the Kumbh and Magh Melas of the opening weeks of 1930, sanyasis played a leading role in turning the festivities into political rallies. On 13 January, fifteen sanyasis held a procession when they sang a national song at the Kumbh Mela. At Allahabad, there was a similar demonstration on the same day: on this occasion accompanied by the carrying of a national flag.[36] The calls of the sanyasis at the Magh Mela knitted Congress policy with religious sanctions: leaflets circulating in Allahabad carried appeals from Swami Parmanand,[37] urging abstinence from intoxicants and the boycott of foreign goods,

[35] Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual*, pp. 234–6.
[36] PAI 18 January 1930.
[37] Swami Parmanand (1874–1947) was born in the Punjab. He came under the influence of the Arya Samaj as a student, and during the 1920s was critical of the Congress for its 'pro-Muslim' policy. In 1932 he declared against the Communal Award and joined the Nationalist Party. S. P. Sen, *Dictionary of National Biography,* vol. III (M–R) (Calcutta, 1974), pp. 318–19.

especially foreign cloth. The support of religious leaders acted as a powerful tool for the success of Congress's foreign boycotts, as these figures were able to give a religious stamp to ideas of ritual pollution associated with foreign goods. In a speech at Gangoh, Saharanpur, one Swami Sharananand of Delhi declared that temples and mosques would be polluted by wearers of foreign cloth.[38] This was an oft repeated refrain, in which foreign presences in India were described as degrading. Yet the particular symbolic meaning of pollution and boycott in the mouth of the holy man tended to privilege religious dimensions of boycott. The ideas of pollution and abstinence frequently took precedence over economic criticisms of imperialism and wealth drain, reflecting the priorities of the speakers and the nature of their environment. The idiom of abstinence and control, noted by Douglas Haynes and David Hardiman in Gujarat, then, also had a place in the politics of UP. Here, though, the language of foreign rejection was transformed by the varied styles of individual swamis, each appealing to specific local traditions and expectations.

Holy men acted as Congress publicists both in an individual capacity and as a collective unit. An official organisation of sadhus, the Parivrajak Mahamandal, did not delay in associating itself with Congress propaganda from the start of civil disobedience. One Satyanand, a member of the Mahamandal, made several speeches at Allahabad declaring that the time for revolution had arrived.[39] There were indications that throughout the period of civil disobedience sadhus supported Congress propaganda on the basis of their own self-designated organisations. The Allahabad-published *Hindu* advocated the organisation of sadhus in the struggle for swaraj – a task to be undertaken at the Kumbh Mela. Just as the Congress used the big bathing festivals at Allahabad and Hardwar to target large numbers, so it viewed the sadhus and sanyasis as a specific social or religious group to whom propaganda could be targeted. At Hardwar, on 28 May 1930, sadhus and pilgrims led by Swami Muktanand entered into an oral pact with the Congress to abide by its programme of foreign boycotts. The sadhus of Banaras pledged themselves to support the local Congress, under the leadership of Padan Nath Shastri, in reaction to the arrest of Madan Mohan Malaviya at the beginning of August.[40]

Sadhus and sanyasis working within institutions, then, were of political significance in UP mainly through the major bathing festivals. The Parivrajak Mahamandal did not feature extensively in the activities

[38] PAI 18 January, 7 September 1930.
[39] *Ibid.*, 1 February 1930.
[40] *Hindu*, 25 January to 1 February, Native Newspaper Report for the United Provinces (UPNNR) L/R/5/99 IOR; PAI 5 April, 7 June, 16 August 1930.

of Congress outside these religious events. However, accessing vast collections of pilgrims at bathing functions necessitated the creation of alliances which might only be temporary. The need for Congress to mobilise these vast gatherings at the beginning of civil disobedience reflected a desire to control as many aspects of mass activity as possible. The sadhus were regarded as another potential political pressure group that could exert influence on huge crowds. Associations with Congress were achieved in an informal way, through 'pledges of support' usually at the instigation of local Congress Committees, as occurred in Banaras.[41] There is little available evidence to argue that there existed a province-wide 'plan' to employ the sadhus in Congress work. But the fact that associations between Congress and holy men sprang up almost effortlessly suggests that personal and professional links existed. Indeed specific cases of the involvement of sadhus in Congress propaganda more often reveal the existence of connections with individual Congress agents. This pattern also fits well with the sense in which the AICC were often surprised by the autonomy with which city and district leaders were able to involve themselves in politico-religious mobilisations which went against the overall policy of provincial committees.[42]

It was as individual preachers, therefore, that holy men were most effective at Congress gatherings. Here, Congress associations with sadhus operated through the use of particular forms of political language as much as direct mobilisation through Congress Committees or mass meetings. Congress holy men adopted a specific political style, giving them the appearance of heroic itinerant preachers, who spiced up Congress politics with songs and poems. This performable genre overlapped with the folk music and dramatic performances of 'nautanki' which became widely popular in UP during the 1920s. By the 1930s the idiom of the folk performance had acquired new social and political dimensions. Local folk music and dance had been gradually appropriated by Indian nationalism, allowing dramatic performances to be politicised, and to act as arenas for local political factional struggles.[43] This also occurred in all-India politics of the left through the Indian People's Theatre Association of the 1940s, representing an attempt to bring together, on an all-India scale, writers, artists, dancers and singers – in this case across communal divides.[44] We see, then, the generation of a form of political spectacle as well as simple political messages or religious sanctions. In

[41] *Aj*, 16 August 1930.
[42] For examples of this see the cases of Baba Ram Chandra and Gorakhpur below.
[43] Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*, pp. 344–54.
[44] Rustom Bharucha, *In the Name of the Secular: Contemporary Cultural Activism in India* (Delhi, 1998), pp. 29–38.

some cases, however, preachers and performers drew direct parallels between Congress policy and organisation and religious authorities, propagating the idea that the Congress as an institution had an authority linked to the great religious texts themselves. Whilst touring Bijnor district on 1 June 1930, Swami Chitanand called on his hearers to follow Congress and the Vedas.[45] Other itinerant preachers took a more popularist approach.

The most famous of these in rural localities across UP was Baba Ram Chandra.[46] As well as drawing on broad popular dramatic styles, Ram Chandra was a key exponent and propagator of the politicised *Ramayana*. This epic more easily entered the public and literary sphere as a result of the advocacy of figures such as Ram Chandra, who also clearly related his style and invocation of Ram Rajya to Gandhi. The dialogue and intersection of meanings connecting Ram to popular literary forms, Congress speeches and political festivals therefore found a hub in agents like Ram Chandra. They also linked Congress rhetoric to an earlier 1920s' rural militancy. During the civil disobedience movement, Ram Chandra toured the province, usually in association with the kisan sabhas. His activities in Banda district at the beginning of February 1930 were typical of his style generally and explained his widespread popularity. On 4 February, Ram Chandra arrived in the district and lodged with Har Prasad Singh. He then started a tour, giving recitals of the *Ramayana* interspersed with remarks on the non-payment of rents and political independence. Whilst touring Aligarh, Ram Chandra allied himself to a local Congress notable, Todar Singh.[47] Inevitably, the activities of itinerant preachers interconnected with factional politics. Todar Singh was an important factional leader in the Aligarh Congress, at the head of a Rajput–Khattri faction, who would have had reason to seek out allies such as Chandra for reasons of local power and prestige. He sought the service of rabble-rousers to compete with the City Congress dominated by the Jwala Prasad Jigyasu clique.[48] That individuals such as Ram Chandra allied themselves to

45 PAI 14 June 1930.

46 Baba Ram Chandra (1875–1950) was born in Gwalior state and cut his political teeth in the Fiji islands, organising labourers against the British. In 1918 he chose Partabgarh and Rae Bareli as his main areas of activity. His political style involved the melodious recitation of the *Ramayana*. He joined the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 but was ignored by most UP Congress leaders. His peasant slogan was 'Jai Jai Sita Ram' and his lifestyle was that of a Kurmi. Sen, *Dictionary of National Biography,* Vol I (A–D), pp. 452–3.

47 PAI 14 June, 15 February 1930.

48 Zoya Hasan, *Dominance and mobilization: Rural Politics in Western Uttar Pradesh* (New Delhi, 1989), p. 89. In the early 1930s Todar Singh and Malkhan Singh controlled the Aligarh District Congress Committee which formed a faction distinct from that of Jwala Prasad Jigyasu in the City Congress Committee.

local leaders suggests that leaders like Todar Singh appreciated the value of the wider political and symbolic spheres that the political holy man would penetrate. Baba Ram Chandra joined the Congress Socialist Party in 1934, but by this point was largely ignored by most UP Congress leaders, perhaps because of his penchant for bhang. Yet the cost of local popularity could be damage to the provincial and national schemes of Congress's approach to non-Hindu communities – a theme that will be explored in further detail in chapter 6.

The religious style employed by such leaders had certainly acquired a kind of vogue at the beginning of civil disobedience. Story-telling from the *Ramayana* has had a long and diverse lineage across India, and it was in no sense homogenised, appearing in different regional variations.[49] The style of its representation has also been diverse – puppet theatre, debate, song-cycles and iconography. Neither were these representations of the *Ramayana* necessarily always 'Hindu' – Jain and Buddhist poets were also prominent.[50] As a tradition and a set of symbols, then, the *Ramayana* was a rich resource from which to draw political views. Yet, by association with broader themes set out in civil disobedience, the diversity of this oral tradition was broken down, contributing to the notion that the symbol of Ram and readings of the *Ramayana* could have a national significance. This reworking of the *Ramayana* was reinforced by the explicit connection with Congress agitations in public performance and in newspapers. The political message of the *Ramayana* appeared not only in meetings, then, but also on paper. Swami Devanand of Agra was prolific in this respect. In one pamphlet dated from 1930 poems were included by him comparing Gandhi to Lord Ram, a commonly used method of deification, which will be discussed in more detail on pp. 72–3.[51] More common was the sense in which the 'struggle' for national identity was described in terms of activists' religiosity. In these pamphlets, foreign rule was associated with Muslim and Christian values, and the strengthening of religious identifications was directly advocated as a method of asserting national originality, and rejection of foreign or immoral government. For example, in February 1930 two leaflets under the authorship of Swami Vivekanand of Ram Krishna Ashram, Kanpur, suggested that India's youth could be reached by an appeal to their religious and moral sense as strong defenders of the nation.[52] Another pamphlet essay by Swami Muktanand in 1932

49 Romilla Thapar, 'The Ramayana Syndrome', *Seminar*, no. 353 (January 1979), pp. 72–5.
50 Paula Richman, ed., *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia* (Delhi, 1992), pp. 12–16.
51 Swami Devanand, *Bhanda Phor* (Etah, 1930). Proscribed Publications PIB.27/28 1930 IOR.
52 PAI 1 March 1930.

suggested that the extirpation of 'evil' rulers could be achieved through the protection of the Hindu religion.[53]

The involvement of sadhus in Congress propaganda was not without its risks. The popularity of Congress imagery and institutions appealed to those aiming to create political capital through an ascetic life. One letter to Jawaharlal Nehru from a lawyer in Gorakhpur gave an account of 'a hotbed of credulity and superstitious beliefs' in the district which had allowed a sadhu to take advantage of his reputation as a Congressman. The lawyer complained that it was 'really unfortunate when Congress sadhus indulge in these waylaying gymnastics of superstition whereby the poor suffer both financially and spiritually'. The complainant then went on to name one Sri Ragho Das. This character had reportedly distributed grain during the Sarjoo river floods, after which news reached the village that he had disappeared into the river for three days to fight Mother Sarjoo. He had apparently entered into a pact with the river goddess, who crowned him king of the low land and granted him compulsory offerings of karalu (puris). This story resulted in an avalanche of offerings, allowing Ragho Das to stockpile 150 sacks of flour. The lawyer concluded: 'everyone with a view to feed his fat ends utilizes this [satyagraha] to the great discredit of the Congress to which these gentlemen generally belong'.[54] This report is from 1937. By this date, the political context had changed dramatically – Congress governments were soon to be in power, and the AICC had planned its Muslim mass contacts compaign in an attempt to overcome a disappointing response to Congress from Muslim electorates. Yet, despite this change in 'minorities' policy at provincial and central levels, local associations between leaders and sadhus continued. The established practice of mutual exploitation between Congress and individual preachers had firmly entrenched itself in the activities of the 1920s and early 1930s. The chickens came home to roost towards the end of the decade: the meaning of the Congress holy man had begun to feed into a political cynicism, strengthened by the damage of 'communal' controversy.

During the early stages of civil disobedience, Congress scruples about association with political operators who might damage central and provincial directives were much less evident. Then the involvement of sadhus enhanced general Congress meetings. In some contexts, their methods were theatrical. At Rae Bareli, Tangan village, in the first week of February 1930, a thousand-strong meeting was opened with a political song by one

[53] Acharya Vithal Sharma Chaturvedi, *Rajyakranti aur Bharatiy* (Saharanpur, 1932), poem by Swami Muktanand, pp. 8–12, PIB 27/24 IOR.

[54] Beni Sewak Tripathi to Jawaharlal Nehru, 21 April 1937, AICC file P-20(ii)/1937 NMML.

Swami Gyananand.[55] In Kanpur, at a meeting in July, Swami Shivanand described in verse the civil disobedience struggle as a holy war.[56] 'Mast Ram', appearing in Bahraich several weeks later, gave a more visually spectacular display of the hero–preacher style. He performed a katha, interlacing Sri Krishna and Sudama with Congress and anti-British propaganda. He toured the district wearing khaki khaddar with a cross-belt and a ceremonial sword. In April, Mast Ram was again agitating in Kanpur, where he charged the government with interference in the religious liberties of Indians. He declared that so long as white people remained, neither Hindus nor Muslims could offer prayers freely.[57] The social separation of the ascetic allowed for both the mendicant satyagrahi and military styles of political posturing. But, curiously, by the 1930s the holy man's political message more frequently brought out notions of self-determination and assertions of religious and political rights. This engagement with the secular concerns of the inter-war colonial predicament was nevertheless propagated through a set of religious symbols and styles. The dialogue of national–secular concerns with invented religious traditions created the sense within and outside Congress that, when 'Hindu-ness' was talked of by Congressmen and women, it was a new, cosmopolitan and somehow 'secular' form of national identification. As will be seen later in the book, this overall meaning was to be particularly damaging for Congress's self-awareness in its engagement with a Hindu idiom. It was also to be responsible for Muslim reactions to a sense of an assertive Hindu political community.

Despite the example of intercommunal harmony given in the example of Mast Ram above, the exhibitionism of sadhus and itinerant preachers who associated themselves with Congress sometimes encouraged conflict between religious communities. This was particularly the case in 1931, shortly after the terrible Hindu–Muslim riot of March in Kanpur, and against the background of an apparent non-involvement of Muslims in the civil disobedience movement.[58] When, in the middle of June 1931, three sadhus were found murdered in Gonda district, the rumour quickly spread that Muslims from Kanpur were involved, and aimed to take revenge for the riot in that city. In September there were signs that some levels of propaganda which appeared in the name of Congress had indeed become more aggressively anti-Muslim. In Etah, at the beginning of that

[55] PAI 15 February 1930. [56] *Vartman* (Kanpur), 30 July 1930.

[57] PAI 8 March and 12 April 1930.

[58] Meeting of the Muslims of Kanpur, 5 April 1931, General Administration Department (GAD) Box 70/71 file 1263/1931 UP State Archives (UPSA). This meeting claimed that Hindu killings during the Kanpur riot had come 'out of its indignation of the Muslims' attitude of neutrality towards civil disobedience movement'.

month, one Ram Chandra from Jaipur (not to be confused with the Ram Chandra connected with the kisan sabhas) began to recite a *Ramayana* katha advocating boycott by appealing to religious instincts. Later on in September his performance showed a clearer prejudice. He asserted that if 'our brethren' (implying the Muslims) had not been traitors, they would be independent by now.[59] Anti-Muslim pronouncements were not a prevailing feature of the religious symbolism of nationalist propaganda, but the informal associations of Congress with sadhus, sanyasis and other preachers meant that Congress was more easily associated with aggressive Hindu communalism when religious identities clashed. Not surprisingly, it was around the period of enquiries into religious violence, or against the background of discussions linking such violence to political parties, that the press and observers picked up on this rhetoric. Nevertheless, in the charged context of a communal controversy, a handful of comments like that of Ram Chandra of Jaipur potentially overturned Congress's institutional plans to associate itself with voices which promoted religious syncretism or those who advocated non-involvement in 'Hindu–Muslim' controversies.

The UP Congress's association with sadhus and Hindu religious leaders in the front line of the civil disobedience movement was both enhancing and limiting. Congress propaganda was able to spread to larger numbers at the major bathing festivals at Allahabad and Hardwar. Swamis making speeches in favour of the Congress movement added a veneer of religious authority and sometimes even of religious sanction. This was particularly effective in relation to the various foreign boycotts, as will be seen on pp. 101–11. One product of the sadhu style was deification of the Congress as an organisation, or of leaders, particularly Gandhi. In the dissemination of propaganda, the methods of holy men and itinerant preachers like Mast Ram and Baba Ram Chandra added an element of novelty to the Congress message. The political programme was put into verse, sung and sometimes presented in a visually theatrical way. Popular religious stories, and epics like the *Ramayana*, were used as a medium through which to explain issues which might otherwise have meant little to communities cut off from metropolitan news sources. It was certainly true that the new militant interpretations of Hinduism in Congress's nationalist symbolism had a particular appeal for the urban poor.[60] Yet whilst this broke down the symbolism of civil disobedience into local units, variable traditions were also homogenised through association with a use of normative political symbols and myths. A secondary effect was to

[59] PAI 27 June, 5 September and 19 September 1931.
[60] Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor.*

imbue notions of civic national identity with a religious dimension, which, because of the overlap of symbols involved, allowed holy man activity to link into press propaganda and the manipulation of religious festivals. The role of the political holy man itself was also frequently able to break down and bridge social, economic and religious differences. The activities of the famous Swami Sahajanand Saraswati in promoting the kisan sabha in Bihar illustrate how this was achieved in a different region.[61]

In the context of early 1930s' UP, this political style was also to have a communal meaning, partly through the agency of the Hindi press and partly through official and Congress reporting. The overall meaning of the political sadhu's politics was therefore transformed by historical associations and in a political dialogue with both national institutions and colonial information-gathering systems. At moments when the energy of civil disobedience erupted into violence, the sadhu as Congress mouthpiece became a victim of apparently unrelated Muslim communal complaints about the Hindu domination of the Congress. Much of the Muslim evidence before the official committee of enquiry into the Kanpur Hindu–Muslim riot of March 1931 pinpointed one cause as the activities of 'Hindu preachers'. Most of this evidence related to the late 1920s and the Arya Samaj campaign of shuddhi or purification.[62] But the continual use of religious rhetoric to propagate Congress ideas in the early 1930s must have created more immediate associations.

It was not the case that the Congress organisation in UP as a whole had set up a deliberate campaign to disseminate a politico-religious message during civil disobedience. In some contexts, Congress's resources had been appropriated by religious groups and individuals for their own agendas. But the fact that the employment of holy men could form a part of the political arsenal of local Congress leaders, such as Todar Singh in Aligarh, suggests that the activities of characters like Ram Chandra and Satyanand were able to impress district Congress leaders. British reports of Congress activity certainly associated the party with religious leaders. This was often a colonial method of putting civil disobedience into the category of irrational fanaticism. These official representations contributed to the political language of a Hindu-tainted Congress created by the Muslim press. By the latter half of the decade, the dangers of the 'communally minded' operator, which had been pointed out in the Congress enquiry report on the Kanpur riot of March 1931, were

61 Pinch, *Peasants and Monks in British India*, pp. 132–3.
62 See, for example, the written statement of Syed Zakir Ali, 'Kanpur Enquiry Committee Report', April 1931, p. 423, L/PJ/7/75 IOR.

described as even more pertinent. In that late 1930s' period, the Congress was much more of an election-fighting machine – an organisation that had to defend itself against a Muslim League strategy which continually characterised Congress as 'Hindu' politics. But such assumptions as appeared by 1937 were crucially informed by the experiences of earlier years. The often arbitrary invocation of Congress messages by sadhus and local holy men, not to mention their connection with established district leaders, was central to this process.

Temples, festivals and politics

Congress activities during civil disobedience were associated with religious arenas in a more widespread way than through the oratory of sadhus. Engineering a mass movement in a country where political institutions had been heavily proscribed by a colonial state put space at a premium. It was necessary to find areas in which large numbers in overcrowded cities, towns and villages could be easily reached: environments which were recognised as meeting places, or places where the gathering of audiences was the norm. To maximise the effect of political messages, these had to be areas in which emotion and enthusiasm could easily be tapped – a space where the outside realities of western domination could have no place or meaning. Work on the beginning of the civil disobedience movement in Bombay from April 1930 has shown that there was a structural similarity between Congress's 'secular' nationalist processions and demonstrations and the activities of participants and audiences during religious festivals.[63] In the context of UP in 1930 and 1931, this argument can be taken further, with evidence of Congress's direct use of religious festivals and religious spaces during processions and political meetings.

The Congress conducted a large number of its mass meetings in public parks, and where possible in town halls. But, not surprisingly, it also made use of derelict and functioning temples, mosques and festivals. These were spaces and occasions which were theoretically divorced from the secularising and modernising city. On the other hand, it would appear to the colonial authorities that a political meeting in a temple represented more than just an audience finding a position of convenience for its political identity. Western understandings of religion placed more defined boundaries between religious and non-religious space – certainly

[63] Jim Masselos, 'Audiences, Actors and Congress Dramas: Crowd Events in Bombay City in 1930', in Jim Masselos, ed., *Struggling and Ruling: The Indian National Congress 1885–1985* (Delhi, 1987), p. 77.

in the context of everyday life. For the colonial intelligence officer, the use of temples, mosques or festival grounds raised the possibility of religious and communal conflict. This was significant insofar as district officers reported on political and religious activity. Their reports then formed the basis of government action during communal conflict. The consequences of Congress's association with festival grounds and temples therefore went beyond the practicalities of mobilisation. Congress activity during a festival would be reported and discussed in terms of the religious dimensions of political messages; the religious or thematic dimensions of Congress activities would then be drawn out and emphasised at a number of levels. By the same token, in employing the holy man, Congress made the chance of mobilisation through such spaces still more likely.

The practical advantages of temples and festivals for Congress organisation imply that the Congress did not use these areas for explicitly religious purposes. At critical moments of civil disobedience, temples and religious meetings provided effective covers for outlawed organisations and their satellites. Nevertheless, in such environments, activists would have addressed audiences already mentally primed with the significance of their surroundings.[64] This is supported by the increased reference to religion in speeches which were conducted in these environments and particularly during festivals, when the imagery used by speakers often mirrored the religious content of the festivals themselves. This mingling of politics with religious festivities can be seen in Congress activities during the festivals of Holi and Dasehra in 1930 and 1931. In nearly every district of UP in 1930 the Holi festival was used as an occasion to fire up a mass movement. For many districts, Holi acquired a 'martial' and aggressive significance.[65] In Etah, Fatehpur, Etawah, Gonda and Faizabad on Holi day, flag processions were taken through markets with singing. In Lucknow on 14 March, in connection with Holi, the City Congress Committee organised a procession and a meeting at Amin-ud-Duala Park.[66] Placards were carried by processionists, calling for the destruction of the British empire and the awakening of India's youth. In Banaras city during Holi, on 15 March, Satyanand and Dharm Deo Shastri burned foreign cloth by the Ganges. At Furrukabad and Hardoi crowds of over five hundred sang national songs and carried flags in Holi

[64] Sandria B Freitag, ed., *Culture and Power in Banaras: Community, Performance and Environment* (Berkeley, 1989), p. 167.
[65] Gooptu, *The Urban Poor*, pp. 589–91. This was not new. The Ganpati and Sivaji festivals of Maharashtra had also acquired a militant and political atmosphere in the 1890s, and were deliberately reconstructed by Tilak to allow greater access to broader social groups. Johnson, *Provincial Politics*, pp. 82–3.
[66] Note of Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, Home Political files (Home Poll.) file 14/21 (1307) 1931 NAI.

processions.[67] In these towns and cities Holi was used as an occasion of national celebration, irrespective of the festival's religious significance. Its timing in March coincided with the inception of the civil disobedience campaign, but its religious significance should be judged with caution. The obsession of colonial administrators was with 'procession routes' during festivals and the coincidence of processions with Muslim prayer times. The colonial sense of communal separation was a distortion: in many districts Muslims freely and eagerly participated in Holi. In an average year, Holi was one of the most important festivals for Muslim as well as Hindu communities. This has been demonstrated in the case of Muslim weaving communities in Banaras.[68]

In Muzaffarnagar in western UP, references to religion by Congressmen during Holi were specific and it was on such occasions that pronouncements could be associated with 'communal' activity. A departure from ordinary practices was generated by reinterpretation of the festival's meaning. Blood imagery and allegories about struggles between good and evil formed a framework for broader political struggles in a language which appropriated the festival's imagery. For example, on 17 March, a speech was made to a large crowd by one Vishnu Chand, which used the *Ramayana* to create a commonly used allegory for Indian nationalism. The speaker asked the audience whether the time had come when it would be necessary to decide whether support should be given to Ram or to Ravan. On another occasion during Holi, in the same district, in Chhapur village, to a crowd of over two thousand, Dr Satypal used the blood imagery associated with Holi to suggest that no harm would be done if Hindus and Muslims were to shed each other's blood, as this would mean the existence of so many fewer slaves in India. A less cynical, but equally aggressive religious symbolism, this time drawing more on Dasehra, was enacted in Allahabad during Holi. On 14 March a crowd of several hundred students, including Jawaharlal Nehru,[69] made its way to the Ramlila ground at Ram Bagh. Once there, a pyre of foreign cloth was built, on top of which a full-sized figure of a man in European hat, coat, neck-tie and trousers was set alight, mimicking the burning of Ravan.[70] The representation of 'government' as a Hindu effigy was a practice which was carried on well into the 1940s. The Banaras Congress

[67] *Aj* (Banaras), 18 March 1930. On 15 March, *Aj* ran a long article entitled 'Mahatma Gandhi's Holi' comparing aspects of the festival to the inception of satyagraha.

[68] See Nita Kumar, *Artisans of Banaras: Popular Culture and Identity* (Princeton, 1988).

[69] The inclusion of Nehru is surprising when it is considered that he vigorously opposed religious activity in politics. However, his presence demonstrated how easily secular leaders could be drawn into religious politics.

[70] PAI 22 March, 29 March 1930.

leader Sri Prakash commented on a procession which contained 'an effigy of "misgovernment"' in 1942.[71]

Utterances like those of Vishnu Chand in Muzzafarnagar, referring to the battle between Ram and Ravan, could help to avert accusations of sedition. The use of such allegories in religious environments was a method of naturalising political messages by suggesting that the extirpation of foreign influences was an intrinsic part of religious life in India. However, the personal intentions of individuals were often less important than the way in which their activity was witnessed and reported. In this sense, the provincial standing of the leader involved was important. Leaders such as Nehru or Vidyarthi set more of an example by their actions than a politician confined to a particular locality. On the other hand, the activities of characters like Vishnu Chand also helped to create a 'norm' of political activity across the western districts of UP, in which more significant leaders could be included during political tours. More important still is the tension within a particular act, between a championing of secularism and depictions of the nation using religious symbolism. It appears that there was no clear or firm understanding of what it meant for a politician to be a 'secularist', especially in the context of civil disobedience. Ideological commitments such as secularism were necessarily constrained by environment: Nehru probably had little political choice but to associate himself with the activities in Allahabad during Holi.

The use of Holi symbolism to manufacture a popular response to Congress in general, and to civil disobedience in particular, was explicitly illustrated in the Hindi dailies in 1930. Hindi papers avidly took up Congress imagery and the comment on political style during civil disobedience was prolific. At the turn of the century, Hindi dailies and periodicals had been used to broaden notions of Hindu identity for middle-class audiences.[72] Hindi papers served a similar broadening function in the 1930s, with political comment entering into a record number of the Hindi publications.[73] But now the meaning was different. By the 1920s, the decade in which the number of Hindi periodicals exceeded those in other vernaculars, the relative strengths of Urdu and Hindi periodicals were discussed more clearly in terms of communal identity. Some Hindi papers were assumed to be the voice of the Arya Samaj's shuddhi or reclamation movement, or the Hindu Sabha's sangathan (Hindu organisation). For example, the *Gorakhshan* of Banaras was characterised as a supporter of cow protection. The *Prem* of Brindaban, edited by Devi Prasad, was

[71] Sri Prakash to Bhagwan Das, 1 July 1942, Sri Prakash Papers, NMML.
[72] Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions*, p. 225.
[73] 8–15 March 1930, UPNNR L/R/5/99 IOR.

locally influential in promoting the cause of shuddhi. Conversely, many of the Urdu papers in the province set themselves against these movements: examples would include *Hifazat* published in Bareilly and *Naiyar-I-Azam* published in Moradabad.[74] This division along linguistic lines was by no means a hard and fast rule. In other areas of the media and popular culture, such as early north Indian talkies, there was a clear Hindi–Urdu mix. But it had become sufficiently pronounced by the 1930s for the All-India Congress Committee to concentrate on starting Urdu papers in the late 1930s in new attempts to 'recruit' Muslims to local Congress bodies.

Furthermore, the messages of Hindi papers could be closely linked to key Congress patrons. The content of papers in this period was directly linked to the nature of political contacts at district, provincial and national levels. Raja Rampal Singh of Kalakankar in Partabgarh district set up the Hammat Press, through which *Hindustan* was published, in association with the Congressman Madan Mohan Malaviya.[75] This was really the beginning of a string of careers, in which leading UP Congress lights bolstered their incomes and gained publicity through journalism: Venkatesh Narayan Tivari edited *Abhyudaya*, the Allahabad-based brainchild of Malaviya between 1916 and 1918. Purushottam Das Tandon had been one of his predecessors in 1910–11. In the early 1930s, Krishna Dutt Paliwal, Congress leader in the district of Agra, was the editor of *Sainik*. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, the famous Kanpur leader, had edited *Pratap* and Acharya Narendra Dev edited the Lucknow socialist monthly *Sangharsh* in 1939.[76]

Domestic journalism was also supposedly linked through to what was recognised as the political public sphere, through the contacts that other newspaper proprietors and editors had built with such journals. For example, *Pratap*, edited by Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi in Kanpur in the early 1920s, frequently advertised the work of up-and-coming writers in Hindi and especially women writing in the new magazines. These magazines engaged with some of the mainstream political debates in UP, which linked into representations of national identity and social reform. For example, in 1922 *Cand* ran a number of articles criticising the ways in which the Hindu Mahasabha had ignored the position of Hindu widows. *Stree Darpan* regularly linked features such as those on the plight of young widows to calls for the political representation of women.[77]

74 'Statement of Newspapers and Periodicals Published in UP, 1924'.
75 H. R. Nevill, *Partabgarh – A Gazetteer, being Volume XLVII of the District Gazetteers of Agra and Awadh* (Allahabad, 1920) p. 75.
76 'Newspaper Periodicals Published during 1930', UPNNR, L/R/5/102 IOR; Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920–1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism* (New Delhi, 2002).
77 Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*, pp. 213–14.

The descriptions of national identity, manifesting themselves through a dialogue of different images and linguistic forms, were not just the fruit of public and largely male-led political protest. A set of symbols was adopted which also played a role in popular vernacular journals, in political literature, satirical and 'nationalist' poetry and campaigns for social reform. Mainstream political newspapers, such as *Aj* and *Pratap*, used a rhetoric in the early 1930s which bore some resemblances to the literary styles of the magazines: *Stree Darpan* in May–June 1919 covered the issue of widow remarriage, and frequently used the image of woman as 'goddess' or devotee of a sanctified 'Mother India'. And one of the magazine's main journalists, Rameshwari Nehru, sought examples from the Puranas to promote women's liberation.[78] As had been argued in many contexts, an attachment to a specifically Indian idiom, rather than an adoption of a women's struggle like that existing in Europe, tended to limit the radicalism of these journals. The attachment to Hindu scriptural ideals very often promoted conservatism – a tendency that appeared in other social reform movements, such as the 'untouchable uplift' movement, investigated in chapter 3.

Much of the discussion in papers such as *Abhyudaya* built on a tradition of discussing the need for Hindu 'sangathan' – a theme of the 1920s, calling for a new unified 'jati' of Indians.[79] The employment of the Hindi periodical in particular, then, had a historical dimension and built upon these older attempts to construct a sense of community. In the week leading up to the 1930 Holi festival, the daily *Sainik*, run by Paliwal, ran a number of nationalistic articles based on Holi, one of which reported that Gandhi had undertaken to dye the bureaucracy with splashes of his blood; that now the people would play 'holi' as Lakshmana had played with Shurpnakha. Similarly, the *Abhyudaya* – another paper which acted as a career springboard for several key UP Congress leaders – referred to a belief that the Holi festival commemorated Prahlad's victory against the demon Hiranyakashyup and that this demon still existed in India today.[80] Holi was also heavily used in the composition of political verse in propaganda pamphlets supporting the Congress. One such tract from Allahabad, published in 1930 under the authorship of one Balbhadra Prasad Gupta, nicknamed 'Rasik', ran a series of short poems drawing symbolic parallels between the red colours of Holi and the blood of

[78] 'Sita, Savriti, Damyati, Shakuntala were not women who lived within the confines of purdah'. In another example, Rameshwari Nehru wrote: 'There are some widows who have dedicated their entire life to selfless devotion and have determinedly taken a vow of chastity and piety; by the grace of God, they are unmoved by the lowly desires of this world, and so sanctify Mother India by their presence.' Quoted in *ibid*, pp. 219, 223.

[79] *Madhuri* III, 2, 2 (32) (March 1925), pp. 136–203.

[80] *Sainik*, *Abhyudaya*, 8 to 15 March and 15 to 22 March 1930, UPNNR L/R/5/99 IOR.

national sacrifice. They were entitled *Holi Me, Holi Ho, Holi Hai* and *Gulaal Ki.*[81]

Dasehra was also used as a stage for Congress campaigns, although not as readily as Holi.[82] However, in Kanpur the 1930 Dasehra was larger than ever before, and all the floats and decorations used khadi instead of foreign cloth. Nevertheless, the well-organised Ramlila Committee refused to allow the City Congress Committee to take over the police arrangements. At other places Dasehra was used simply as a way of targeting large numbers of people for the purposes of propaganda. At Manauri, in Allahabad district, leaflets were distributed calling on people not to pay rent. In Etah, Ramlila was almost completely transformed into a celebration of National Week. In some cases, the infrastructure in place for the celebration of Dasehra was used for meetings all the year round. In the first few months of 1930, Congress activists in Saharanpur district made good use of the Ramlila buildings to hold meetings and recruitment drives.[83]

This use of infrastructure was echoed at the large bathing festivals, the Magh Mela and Kumbh Mela, where Congress had established permanent camps. Early in the civil disobedience movement, Jawaharlal Nehru frequently addressed large audiences at both Allahabad and Hardwar. There was a similar arrangement at the bathing festivals of Garmukhtesar and Kharkhareda in Meerut district, where the Congress made repeated efforts in 1930 and 1931 to win over pilgrims. At the Garhmuktesar fair in 1930 the Congress held two giant meetings of four thousand and eight thousand. In November 1930 Congress took advantage of the well-attended Purnamashi bathing fair. Here, on 1 February 1931, the last day of the Magh Mela, Gandhi addressed a crowd of roughly twenty thousand people. In a speech infused with appropriate symbolic references, he thanked God for the sacrifices rendered by the people. At the Daranagar bathing fair in Bijnor district, Mahabir Tyagi headed meetings of more than two thousand.[84] Again, the heavy Congress presence at festivals and fairs, especially in close relation to the religious activities of those events, added fuel to moments of communal resentment. In Agra, in August 1930, a Hindu–Muslim riot flared up over a small incident at the Jumna bathing fair. The Muslims of the city wished to bathe

81 Balbhadra Prasad Gupta, *Khuun Ke Chhinte* (Allahabad, 1930), Proscribed Publications PIB 67/4 IOR.

82 Holi had always been a less uniform festival in terms of the way in which it was celebrated. Whilst Dasehra is marked by universally acknowledged 'days', the duration of Holi varied from town to town across UP, from a sober one or two days in the polite city of Lucknow to over a week in Kanpur and Banaras.

83 PAI 4 and 11 October, 11 January 1930.

84 *Leader* (Allahabad), 4 February 1931; PAI 15 November 1930 and 7 February 1931.

near the women's ghat. This was strongly opposed by Hindu bathers, resulting in a fracas. The implicit involvement of Congress volunteers was suggested by the behaviour of Muslims at the fair on the next day. More riots were nearly provoked by Muslim attempts to snatch Gandhi caps.[85]

The UP Congress also involved itself in Muslim festivals in 1930 and 1931. Similar recruitment drives were attempted during Mohurram and Bakr-Id. However, there were important differences in the activities of the Congress on these occasions, reflecting a growing awareness that the Congress had already been closely involved in forms of religious mobilisation associated with Hinduism. In February 1931, at Mirzapur, timid appeals were made by Uma Nehru to Muslims not to purchase foreign cloth during Bakr-Id. The previous year the attempts to win over Muslims during this festival had only been in the form of concessions, which reinforced the idea that Congress was coming from the Hindu angle. In Meerut during Bakr-Id the City Congress Committee attempted to win general Muslim sympathy by allowing cows to go through the public thoroughfares. In 1930, in the same district, Congress decided not to agitate during Mohurram. In Moradabad city Congressmen involved themselves in Mohurram by distributing sharbat. Captive crowds are always fodder for the politician and activist, but the note of celebration evident in Congress's involvement in Holi and Dasehra was absent in the case of Muslim festivals. Indeed, on some occasions Congress's presence was resented. In 1931, in Aligarh city, local Muslims voiced strong objections to the appearance of Congress flags during Mohurram. Todar Singh, a local Congress notable quickly claimed that the police themselves had incited the complaints. Nevertheless, a large section of Muslims were undoubtedly sensitive to the involvement of Congressmen in what they considered to be sacred places. This was especially the case in a city like Aligarh. Here, in August 1931, an attempt by Malkhan Singh to make appeals on behalf of the Congress from the steps of the Jami Masjid was met with strong vocal opposition.[86] Such responses to civil disobedience contrasted with the readiness of Muslims in other regions to develop their own form of rhetoric in support of Gandhi's non-cooperation between 1919 and 1922, particularly in Gujarat and Bombay.[87]

[85] PAI 23 August 1930. [86] PAI 30 May, 8 August 1931.

[87] Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual*, pp. 268–9. The breakdown of the Khilafat agitation, the split in Congress and the mid-1920s' communal riots in UP of course provide some of the background to this distrust of Congress. The attitude of Muslims to the Congress in Aligarh had always been divided and ambivalent. The activities of Todar Singh and Jigyasu in their patronising of Hindu religious publicists could draw together Muslims with otherwise very divided political loyalties.

The cases involving Dasehra and the bathing festivals, because they took place in a clearly defined environment and period, allowed ostensibly secular Congress symbols to appear alongside and intersperse with religious imagery. The appropriation of the festival transformed and limited the meaning of political activity. This was facilitated further by the very open and participatory nature of these festival occasions in UP. Important UP leaders attempted to generate a sense that the catholicity and inclusiveness of Hinduism mirrored the inclusiveness of national identity. Yet this cosmopolitanism contrasted sharply with the failure to penetrate Muslim spaces to the same extent. Increasingly, over the early 1930s, 'Hindu' festival space came to be seen also as Congress space.

There is evidence to suggest that Congress's association with Hindu religious spaces and environments was another issue which fuelled Muslim resentment in several cities in UP. In Farrukabad district at the end of 1930 the Congress organisations and their associated volunteer bodies were declared unlawful. The local Congress's response to this was to cease all obvious outward activities, but to continue to meet and agitate through 'quasi-religious meetings', using temples and occasions of puja (worship). As this activity progressed, there was an increase across the district in Muslim involvement in communal organisations, one mass meeting on 19 December being attended by nearly three thousand people.[88] That Muslim communal organisations in UP were making explicit links between the Congress and 'Hindu' religious environments is suggested in other localities. In Kanpur, in May 1931, an Urdu poster entitled 'Muslims of Kanpur' was discovered posted outside the Arya Samaj hall. The poster threatened Hindus in general, and the Congress in particular, with vengeance for what had happened during the riot in March. Other Muslim pamphlets picked up on this mood. A leaflet found in Kanpur in June 1930, entitled *Congress and Muslims*, made the commonly used argument that Muslims should avoid the Congress as its success would only lead to 'Hindu Raj'.[89]

Muslim suspicions were fuelled not just by Congress's apparent involvement in festivals, but also by more generally viewed linkages between religious space and political activity. As in the case of Farrukabad

[88] PAI 3 January 1931.

[89] Written statement of Ram Ratan Gupta, 'Kanpur Enquiry Report', 30 April 1931, pp. 288–97, L/PJ/7/75 IOR; PAI 28 June 1930. The association of Congress with Hindu communalism by Muslims more regularly occurred during or after riots such as that in Kanpur in March 1931. However, the persistent use of religious space by Congressmen only reinforced the often vague connections that some Muslim communal bodies were able to make about links between Congress politics and Hindu communalism. The process was also cumulative: Muslim complaints often surfaced in periods after a riot, or the build-up of a Congress mass movement.

outlined above, in some districts the Congress was not afraid to associate itself both symbolically and physically with places of Hindu worship. In Banaras local Congressmen frequently used the Arya Samaj temple to make speeches and stage demonstrations.[90] On 4 May, a charkha was set up in the temple, under the leadership of Narendra Dev Shastri. In Etawah and Pilibhit districts, in the summer of 1930, some temples outwardly associated themselves with Congress's aims by refusing entry to worshippers not wearing khaddar. The Gauri Shankar temple in Pilibhit and the temples of Aligarh were especially strong advocates of this policy. In some cities during civil disobedience the symbols of Congress were occasionally associated with Hindu temples. In Ajodhya, at the end of June, a large number of people thought that the Congress flag was actually hoisted on top of the Nageshwarnath mandir. In fact, it was hoisted just next to it. However, at Pauri, a Congress flag was actually attached to the roof of a temple. In Farrukabad district, at the beginning of November 1930, the Congress office at Kanauj was moved to a temple.[91]

It is difficult to identify a direct link between Congress's use of religious spaces and specific Muslim complaints against the Congress in UP during the 1930s. But, in the context of the oft repeated public confusion of religious activity with political activity, it is likely that Congress involvement in religious festivals contributed to Muslim scepticism with regard to Congress's secularist credentials. The outstanding example of direct confusion between political and religious processions, leading to severe Hindu–Muslim conflict, was the Kanpur riot of March 1931. In that case, the Congress cloth boycotts and activities of the Banar Sena were continually tied up with accusations of communal attacks.[92] Taking into account the publicity of the aftermath of that riot, the vigorous attempts of the Congress at a national level to disavow communalism, and the tendency of the British to identify all religious activity as potentially 'communal' (and represent it publicly as such),[93] Congress's use of religious space could not easily have avoided being represented as communally antagonistic.

Congress's use of religious space in important cases therefore accentuated Muslim exclusion and served to reinforce notions of separate

[90] In chapters 4 and 6 it will be seen that Sampurnanand and Tandon also regularly used Arya Samaj premises.
[91] PAI 17 May, 5 July, 8 November 1930 and 19 September 1931.
[92] Report of Jagdish Prasad, 3 April 1931, GAD Box 70/71 file 1263/1931 UPSA.
[93] 'Measures to Relieve Communal Tension', Home Poll. file F.140 1925 NAI. 'Hinduism, for the first time in the history of our rule has been a proselytizing religion . . . through the collapse of the khilafat movement, we have returned to the real politics of India – communal differences.'

Muslim political arenas. This sense of exclusion, relating to Congress's involvement in Hindu religious environments, was illustrated in the quite different way in which Congress leaders were forced to operate during Muslim festivals. Congress sympathisers did attempt to induce Muslim support by the same methods, but the attempts were always circumspect. Approaches to the mosque or Muslim festival, outside the centres of Congress's Muslim support, were often met with hostility. Congress's association with religious environments and festivals created the impression of its closeness to particular sectarian groups or religio-political organisations in the locality. In many cases, obviously Hindu communal organisations like the Mahabir Dals, Hindu Sabhas and RSS were willing to use the public power of Congress to enhance their own agendas. Congress activities were thereby further exposed to misinterpretation – involvement in religious festivals attracted the usually unwanted attentions of communal leaders, and quite innocent involvement in festivals could tar Congress as a whole with the same brush. This situation constrained ostentatiously secular messages – a predicament repeatedly faced by leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru. We can only understand this process by appreciating the sense in which the dialogue and interaction between forms of Congress symbolism about the nation and local religious spaces constrained and transformed Congress's relationship with the notion of 'Hindu'. In the early 1930s, the astute politician with no communal agenda could see the advantages of agitating during Holi. But the price was a loss of control over the meaning and consequences of their political utterances. The next section will show how this loss of control was also generated by another important ingredient in the Congress's use of religion: the adoption of religious imagery and rhetoric in speeches, pamphlets and newspapers.

Oratory and religion: speeches on the nation

In the building of a movement such as civil disobedience, which aimed to appeal across districts and towns, the power and content of oratorical and written propaganda was an essential ingredient. This section examines the nature and content of nationalist speeches and writings in UP in the early 1930s. Historians have noted that there was a definite historical progression in the content of political pamphlets, leaflets and handbills, which both increased in volume by 1930, and whilst being dominated by poetry and songs, were also markedly more 'communal' from that year.[94] It is possible to see a parallel process in political speeches. These too used

[94] Barrier, *Banned Controversial Literature* p. 113.

classic literary motifs, thickly laden with the symbolism and imagery promoted by propagandistic literature and Congress press releases. In the context of foreign rule, battle-like, combative imagery appeared, regardless of the non-violent strictures of Gandhi's leadership. There are links here with the favoured religious idioms of the bazaar poor.[95] But the employment of these political languages owed much to the spatial contexts outlined in the last two sections – the festival, the religious meeting ground and the katha audiences of itinerant holy men.

Congress rhetoric was highly emotive. This was particularly moulded to the circumstances of civil disobedience, when a more cerebral rhetoric would have been less fruitful than a reiteration of the largest aims of the movement. Religious ideas, both of an explicitly brahmanical and of a popular or localised nature, provided a means of enhancing the simplicity of the Congress's initial aims, and of giving those aims an emotive force for as much of UP society as possible. In some cases this was achieved by the invention of a new kind of national mythology, endowed with power by the reference to the 'Goddess of Freedom', or to Bharat Mata (Mother India).[96] Themes common within Hindu devotionalism appeared in this national mythology – ideas of duty, renunciation and self-discipline.[97] The connection between a civic nationalist mythology and popular devotional symbols allowed thematic jumps and connections between notions of the 'Hindu' and an intercommunal message. At moments of more extreme verbosity and drama, India's leaders were deified in speeches, in an attempt to make the emotive connection more powerful still. The lack of a sharp differentiation between the divine and the human in Hindu society and worship meant that the deification of leaders had been a long-standing practice in north Indian public life.[98] More revealing was the ubiquitous and repetitious nature of religious rhetoric in Congress oratory across UP. In most political meetings during 1930 and 1931, where such rhetoric appeared, there was at least one comparison between the India–British relationship and the hero–villain relationship of the Hindu epics. Again and again civil disobedience was described as a religious duty, incorporating ideas of dharma and self-sacrifice.

The by-product of this rhetorical approach, was to re-represent diverse oral traditions as part of a broad 'national' project and to draw the symbolic boundaries of what constituted the 'true' Indian nation. Because religion had been used to defend that definition, it became an important

95 Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*, pp. 352–7.
96 Bharat Mata was also a method of relating India to the idea of the sacred cow. Van Der Veer, *Religious Nationalism*, pp. 86–94.
97 Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual*, pp. 224–36 ; Fuller, *The Camphor Flame*, pp. 164–8.
98 Fuller, *The Camphor Flame*, pp. 30–1.

yardstick for the theoretical boundaries of Indianness. In Bombay in 1930, at the inception of non-cooperation, the 'new' religion created by the deification of the motherland was able to have an appeal across the divide of religious communities, with leading Muslims taking part in ritualistic Congress demonstrations.[99] But the talk about reverence for the nation, and the necessity for sacrifice which might have had relevance for all religious communities in India, frequently drew upon ideas and imagery which were considered to be distinctly Hindu. The deification of elements of the land itself drew more obvious parallels with ideas like the purifying power of the Ganga. Indeed, at moments when important leaders were deified, Siva, Vishnu or the latter's incarnations were most commonly invoked. It is also possible to identify a Muslim nationalist rhetoric in this period which described support for Congress movements in terms of religious duty. But Islamic symbolism did not lend itself to the same degree of personification. Moreover, the 'outsider' or infidel for many Muslims was clearly someone outside an international community of Islam. By contrast, the foreigner in 'Hindu' rhetoric was positioned specifically and unambiguously in relation to the subcontinent itself. This demonisation of 'foreigners' in India also had a relevance, sometimes explicity stated, for earlier invaders of the subcontinent – the various Muslim communities who, despite differing ethnic origin and levels of assimilation into indigenous cultures, were easily characterised as 'invaders' by virtue of their religion. This was especially the case when Congress nationalists were so obviously attempting to draw upon the 'ancient' virtues of India's spirituality and independence. Real origins here were crucial. Yet it would have been difficult for historically conscious Muslims, aware of the significance of Islam in the medieval subcontinent, to share in the adulation of those origins of India's ancient past. This was illustrated in the late 1930s by Muslim reactions to the Wardha education scheme and to 'Bande Mataram' as will be seen in chapter 6.

A recurrent style of religious rhetoric in the speeches and writings of Congress supporters, however, was far from ancient in its essential characteristics. The most commonly evoked images were based on a new national pantheon, relating divine figures and virtues to political and civic freedoms. This style usually placed the freedom struggle in a symbolic framework, allowing virtues like freedom to be personified, like the Goddess of Liberty during the French Revolution.[100] For example,

[99] Masselos, 'Audiences, Actors and Congress Dramas', pp. 78–9.

[100] Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London, 1996), pp. 286–90. Rousseau, in his advocacy of a 'state religion', described the invention of rituals and symbols. In 1793, at Notre Dame, Rousseau's ideas were put into effect at a 'festival of Reason' which featured the 'Goddesses of Reason and Liberty'.

in a Congress meeting in Meerut city on 15 February 1930, police reporters noted a comment by one speaker who announced that the thirst of the goddess of freedom was being quenched with the blood of martyrs. Again in Meerut, on 8 March, Indra Mani made a more general reference to the divine nature of the virtues promoted by nationalist activity. He declared that if section 144 had existed in times gone by there would have been no Muhammed and no Ram. He went on to say that freedom of speech was the gift of God and that no government had a right to check it. This kind of imagery was often used to target youth. In the same district, a bulletin of the Hindustani Seva Dal was distributed, headed 'Ye Flowers of the Nation'. It appealed to students to offer themselves to the 'brightly burning fire of the goddess of freedom', provoking several young members to offer themselves for self-immolation. In the same month a leaflet was found in Kanpur entitled 'Bharat Mata's Message to College Students'. One of its main themes played on the image of 'Mother India', who could not stand the slaughter of innocents.[101]

Another common rhetorical approach was to describe the freedom struggle as something divinely ordained. Examples of this approach are ubiquitous, covering almost every region of UP, but they often did not form the main refrain of a speech. To some extent the sense of freedom as a spiritual struggle was something of a habit of mind, and speakers naturally spiced their concluding remarks with references to divine duty. March 1930 was a perfect occasion for such an approach: On the 30th of that month in Agra, designated Martyr's Day, Krishna Dutt Paliwal addressed approximately two thousand people and concluded by saying that the fight against the government was a religious one. About one week later, in Rae Bareli, Mahesh Narayan Singh made a speech declaring that the 'present struggle' was holy and religious, and appealed to all in the name of religion. On 5 April, at a Youth League meeting in Bareilly, Darbari Lal said that it was the social and religious duty of students to change the government.[102] If the freedom movement had a religious significance, then the British in general and the government in particular were cast as demonic and satanic. In Kanpur, in the same fortnight, at a Congress meeting attended by G. G. Jog, Piarey Lal Sharma[103]

[101] PAI 22 February, 15 March, 16 August 1930. [102] *Ibid.*, 5, 12 April 1930.

[103] Piarey Lal Sharma (1873–1941) was born in Mathura district. He was arrested during non-cooperation and was a proponent of untouchable uplift. He was a strong advocate of the extirpation of western influences from education. Sen, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. IV, pp. 164–5.

and Piarey Lal Agarwal, one speaker – Balkrishna Sharma[104] – stated that, on his salt march, Gandhi was advancing towards the sea to destroy this 'satanic' government. It had now become the religious duty of every Indian to commit sedition. Indra Mani of Meerut was never one to miss an opportunity for fire and brimstone, and in a speech on 6 April he proclaimed that the religious books showed how God ruined evil-doers, and that he failed to understand why God was not ruining the British.[105] These pronouncements were particularly concentrated in March and April 1930 and appeared as a form of celebration of the beginning of civil disobedience.

Specific references to particular texts or religious traditions more commonly made up the central theme of a speech than the general approach outlined above. Congress Muslims often evoked scriptural authority to back political action. In a speech at Kanpur, Husain Ahmad Madni produced the authority of the 'Hadis', arguing for Muslims to join satyagraha. Overwhelmingly, though, religious references were derived from Hindu texts and epics. Even the left wing of the Congress, or individuals less associated with Hindu nationalism, used specific religious references in speeches. On 7 April 1930, Ganesh Vidyarthi, the great Congress leader of Kanpur and the then president of the UP Provincial Congress, made a speech in the city in which he noted that the Puranas taught how, whenever men suffered oppression, a great change occurred.[106] A more dramatic and more common use of a Hindu idiom was the characterisation of the different sides of the freedom struggle as characters from the ancient Indian epics. At a mass meeting in April in Amin-ud-Duala Park in Lucknow, attended by seven thousand people, an old man called Bhagwan Din recited a poem which included the lines: 'Dear Ram and Krishna why are you delaying; kill the knaves soon, it is your country.' A very similar sort of appeal was produced in a political leaflet, produced in Fatehpur, entitled *Dhikkar hai! Dhikkar hai! Abhi socho*. The author, Shanti Kumari Devi, appealed to the police that if they were descendants of Ram and Krishna they should refuse to follow orders.[107] An oft recurring theme was that of the battle between Ram and Ravan, drawn from the *Ramayana*. The speeches of a host of lesser Congressmen and itinerant

[104] Balkrishna Sharma and G. G. Jog were leading Congressmen in Kanpur during the 1930s, both acting as City Congress presidents during the decade. Sharma was later to be involved in communal controversy surrounding the 1939 riot in the city (See chapter 4).
[105] PAI 5 April, 12 April 1930.
[106] Vidyarthi was killed during the Kanpur riot of March 1931. His name became a symbol of Hindu–Muslim accommodation. PAI 19 April 1930.
[107] *Ibid.*, 26 April 1930.

preachers used this oral tradition. In Kanpur, on 13 September, Rama Shankar predicted that the government would be destroyed like Ravan. In the same district, in the village of Jamaura one week later, Someshwar Dayal called on a gathering of 200 students to make themselves brave like Ram. At Itarra in Kanpur district, in mid-October, Manbodhan Singh predicted that Gandhi would end this government like Ram who destroyed Ravan. At a political meeting of boys in Meerut, called the Bal Prem Sabha, Ram Chandra used the same legendary gods in his exhortations to the 500 assembled youths.[108] Congress's pamphlet propaganda also evoked Hindu deities, setting them up as symbols in a war against western modernity.[109]

Although appearing in a range of rural and urban contexts across the province, the use of this style was more squarely part of the political arsenal of local politicians and quite rarely entered the agendas of provincial Congress politics. Yet these speeches were not peripheral in the sense that they disappeared from individual or collective consciousness once a meeting had concluded. The comparison between political activity and the Indian epics was also a part of the burgeoning Hindi press, especially in this early part of the decade. The rhetoric therefore had a literary provenance and reached varying levels of the reading and listening public. For example, the *Deshmitra* ran an article in the first week of April which talked of Britain in terms of 'the extremely cruel Ravana'. The *Aruna* reported in the same week that the story of Ramchandra and Ravana was being repeated. In the first week of October, *Darshan* talked of Gandhi bringing the principles of the *Ramayana* to his political struggle – that all his followers should become soldiers of Ram.[110] There was a critical interconnection, then, between the *Ramayana* as the holy man's style and the more general symbolic exercise of the Congress in UP. Press, festival and itinerant preacher all made up the dialogic strands of what Congress had come to mean in public discourse. This was a Congress that engaged with the heart of a popular religious imagery, but transformed its diverse and separated meanings to make it national.

Gandhi fitted the role of epic hero in speeches with great regularity both in the press and on the platform. It has been suggested that the reception of Gandhi at a popular level allows us to view the ways in which specific localised peasant consciousnesses developed different and fragmented

108 *Ibid.*, 27 September, 4 October, 18 October 1930.
109 Jagnath Prasad Arora, *Pernicious Influence of the West* (Banaras, 1930), PP.Hin.B.298 IOR. The first poem in this book included the words 'when you show us machine guns, we will show you the wheel. This is Vishnu's discus', p. 3.
110 *Deshmitra*, *Aruna*, 5 to 12 April ; *Darshan*, 4 to 11 October, 1930 UPNNR L/R/5/99 IOR; PAI 12 April, 2 August, 4 October, 18 October, 25 October 1930.

representations of the Mahatma.[111] Yet it is possible to identify common themes appearing in quite different localities and through varying forms of media. At Khampur Ahtrauli Bazar in Gorakhpur district, on 28 September, one Bhagwali Koiri declared in front of 5,000 listeners that Gandhi was in fact an incarnation of Lord Krishna. The same claim was made in Moradabad district, at Hasanpur two weeks later in a speech by one Dr Tika Ram. Speeches were made in Aligarh, in February 1931, which again claimed that Gandhi was an incarnation of Krishna and that as such he would easily be able to dodge the bullets of the British. Sometimes incarnation was not actually claimed, but parallels were drawn. In Patarpur village in Allahabad district, in June 1931, a comparison was made between Krishna and Kans and Gandhi and the government.[112] The religious heroism of Gandhi was represented pictorially.[113] With the commencement of civil disobedience, Gandhi was also frequently compared with the 'Hindu' hero Sivaji in the timing of his campaign. This occurred in March 1930, in a speech by one Ram Murat Naidu, as he addressed 500 students of Banaras Hindu University.[114] In any case, descriptions of Gandhi along these lines were perhaps less startling than has been presumed. The mortal–deity comparison worked both ways, and it had been normal practice for the divine attributes or gods and goddesses to be set up as examples for national development. This can be seen quite commonly in Hindi journals targeting women.[115]

Evocation of the Ram–Ravan conflict demonised the foreigner and encouraged comments on political history. Discrediting the British sometimes led, by extension, to criticism of Muslim India. On occasion, this was simply a by-product of the type of historical imagery being used in speeches. On 17 March a public meeting was held in Mirzapur to celebrate the birthday of Sivaji. One Sita Ram, speaking on the boycott of foreign goods, said that just as Sivaji had fought against the Muslims, so Indians should be ready to fight the government for independence.[116]

[111] Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern U.P., 1921–2', in R. Guha, *Subaltern Studies*, vol. III: *Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi, 1984), pp. 3–5. Shahid Amin describes how Gandhi was perceived to have performed miracles in Gorakhpur district.

[112] PAI 18 October 1930, 28 February; 20 June 1931.

[113] Poster by Prabhu Dayal, *Bharatoddar* (Kanpur, 1930) P.P.Hin.F.58 IOR. This poster showed Gandhi standing on a podium with the word 'Aryavart' inscribed on it. At his feet, on the left, sits 'Mother India', and to the right is a European soldier. See front cover.

[114] 'Political Activities of BHU', secret note of Tassadutt Hussain. Education Department file 127/1930 UPSA.

[115] *Cand* (Allahabad), 1, 22, July 1921. The ancient ideal of Sita was used here as an example for national emulation.

[116] PAI 29 March 1930.

The implications of this comment are interesting. Firstly, an implicit connection was made between the British as foreign rulers and Muslims. Secondly, although the speaker used the word 'Indians', another conclusion which might have been drawn is that the Muslims mentioned in the first half of the simile were not really Indians. Similar references to Muslim history compared the rule of the British with Aurangzeb. The historical connotations of the rule of Aurangzeb were partly developed by British orientalists in search of a genealogy of British rule. Akbar was compared favourably with Aurangzeb, whose rule represented 'Mahommedan tyranny' comparable in orientalist eyes to the English James II.[117] Here again, it was through a dialogue and understanding of colonial notions of Indian history that the full meaning of these historical pronouncements became apparent. On 10 May in Budaun, Udhar Narayan, a local Congress leader declared that the English were even more tyrannical than Aurangzeb. The same comparison was made by Ram Nath Kunbi in the village of Bhupat in Mirzapur district in June 1931, and on 31 August at Saharanpur a speaker claimed that the gold of Aurangzeb had in fact been exported to Britain.[118] Ideas of Muslim despotism were moreover easily linked to Muslim resistance to satyagraha. This form of criticism became stronger once the main period of cloth boycotts had commenced, as will be seen in the following chapter. At Hardoi, on 19 June, Vidyawati asked his hearers not to mind the behaviour of the Muslims – that swaraj would be achieved without them. In April 1931, in Jalaun, a Hindi poster was put up saying that Muslims would be forced to eat pig's flesh for not joining the Bhagat Singh hartal. In January 1930 a Congress spokesman in Bareilly, one Bihari Lal, went so far as to state that Islam was false and recommended that people subscribe money to the Congress.[119]

Congress's Hindu idiom aimed to create a technique of mobilisation that would allow speaker and audience to transcend the realities of constrained political power in the colonial state. The idea of a divine purpose behind the freedom struggle was essential to the widespread justification of the more daring and 'seditious' movements against foreign rule. Reference to epics, comparisons with deities and the reproduction of religious allegories created a political space that challenged colonial notions of the

117 Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 56.
118 PAI 24 May 1930; 20 June, 12 September 1931.
119 PAI 11 January, 28 June 1930. These are isolated examples, but their significance lies against the background of Congress readings of political history, which glorified a Hindu past and condemned foreign tyranny.

'religious'. Characters from the Hindu epics, always available for poetic recycling, gave speakers and writers the ideal framework in which to sensationalise the contemporary situation. Stories like the battle between Ram and Ravan set up the idea that the victory of the Congress was inevitable: an especially useful tool during periods of government repression. But in UP there were indications that these political languages could become more than simply tools by which to garner mass support. A religious idiom was used by leading publicists to define national identity and to popularise political thinking that was deliberately juxtaposed to western materialism. Some of these ideas will be investigated in more detail in chapter 5. But, in other respects, this religious rhetoric borrowed many of the assumptions of the coloniser. The urban and rural poor were naturally assumed to be responsive to the religious rather than the rational. Congressmen had also inherited a tendency to view religion as a method of appealing to the 'imagination of the masses'. Motilal Nehru complained about this feature of politics during the 1926 elections.[120] It was a method used as late as the elections of 1936 and 1937.[121] The concept of the authentically Indian as being sited somehow in the popular mind tended artificially to homogenise diverse popular traditions and therefore consolidated the notion of 'Hindu'. But this was not simply and unambiguously a technique by which north Indian elites imagined the politics of the struggling poor. Representing the nation in religious terms was the basis of a definite political ideology for some Congressmen. For the early-century Europeanised urban elites such as the Nehrus it might appear calculating, and to contain a cynical desire to exploit superstition and ignorance. In the following section it will be seen that in some areas its role was prescriptive, aiming to discipline political support through the imposition of ritual boundaries and stigmas of pollution.

Harnessing the cow for Congress

One of the most important concerns of Congress leaders during civil disobedience was to keep the movement under enough control to prevent a collapse into violence. The enormity of the agitation created a great number of divergent ideas, many of which frequently came into mutual conflict, perpetually threatening to break up provincial and national plans for the movement. The potential for violence was always

[120] Chaudhuri Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, (Lahore, 1961) p. 87.
[121] Nanda, *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, vol. VII, pp. 411–14.

there and agitations could and did quite easily run out of control.[122] Most historians are agreed that an important application of Gandhi's ahimsa and asceticism was to create a method whereby mass agitation could be directed and restrained.[123] Concentration on discipline obviously helped to sell the Congress organisation to landed interests and powerful urban magnates, as well as to create the appearance of cohesion.

Affiliation with the Congress could be a method by which to structure and live one's life.[124] Devotion to the Congress was deliberately represented in speeches and movements as parallel to spiritual forms of devotion. This devotional element of Congress affiliation was of course quite varied but allowed religious sanction to be used in more specific ways to simultaneously control the actions of followers and discredit the foreign. This was an essential component of Gandhi's own methods during civil disobedience: his was a central influence in this connection between personal self-control and collective discipline using religion. In a letter of 14 August 1932 he wrote: 'we must sacrifice ourselves in the interest of the family, the family must do so for the nation and the nation for the world. But the sacrifice has to be pure. Therefore it starts from self-purification.'[125] Other leaders appropriated Gandhi's philosophy of 'swaraj' or individual, spiritual self-rule to transform these interpretations of Indian contact with the foreigner. Yet the Gandhian idiom was strong – attention was persistently directed towards the individual conscience: the need for self-reform and the sense that self-purification was a key to community well-being. In this form of Congress rhetoric, then, we see themes of ritual pollution and abstinence highlighted in an attempt to relate small-scale, local, even individual practices to a broader sense of national purification.

One way in which this was achieved in nationalist rhetoric in the early 1930s was through general beliefs about abstinence and cow protection. Another key root here in UP was caste associations. The cow protection movement of the 1890s in UP had included elements of social reform

122 The best example of this was provided in the termination of the non-cooperation movement after the burning of a police station at Chauri Chaura in 1922. Shahid Amin, *Event Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922–1992* (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 9–11.

123 Sarkar, '*Popular' Movements and 'Middle Class' Leadership*, pp. 50–2.

124 This process is humourously illustrated in R. K. Narayan, *Waiting for the Mahatma* (Madras, 1979). In this novel, Narayan depicts a character who decides to devote his life to the nationalist cause. His attempt is somewhat besmirched by the real motive for his decision to follow the Mahatma: his interest in one of his female devotees. However, in this book there are some vivid, albeit fictional, accounts of how it was possible temporarily to leave a material life in the Congress cause.

125 *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol. L: June–August 1932* (Ahmedabad, 1972), p. 370.

and abstinence as a part of the reform efforts of Kurmis and Ahirs. The Gwala movement in eastern UP and Bihar revived the idea of the Ahir as protector of 'dharma' in bygone days, making comparisons with the 'cowherd' god Krishna.[126] But during civil disobedience, a little like the reworking of the *Ramayana* and the significance of festival imagery, the cow was taken up in a new way, appearing across the public political sphere. There were dominant literary and dramatic styles: the gluttony and cruelty of the British could be well represented in accounts of both their material excesses and their flesh-eating antics. The image of gentleness, purity, truth and sacrifice in the Congress could be strengthened, and age-old fears about the sacredness of the cow used to keep the collar tight on Hindu followers. This new attention to cow protection should also be interpreted as part of a combination of idioms incorporating a sense of ritual pollution, which included, for example, the cloth boycott movement. The two movements had a point of cross-reference, each influencing the other in their symbolic meaning. Cow protection was a particularly useful weapon, given the aims of the Congress to achieve a mass boycott of foreign goods during civil disobedience. The taboo of ritual pollution served as a way of disgracing foreign products in India in the eyes of the populace.

Harnessing the power of the cow had the same side-effect as rhetorically criticising the influence of foreign rule in India. It estranged a large section of the Muslim population. It did so in a way which directed attention to notions of a historical antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. The political language of cow protection in 1930 and 1931 gained a particular resonance and meaning, through historical associations with late-nineteenth-century protection movements. These had more clearly contained assertions of Hindu identity through caste mobilisation. Yet animal slaughter was an integral part of the Bakr-Id festival, and economic circumstances meant that a larger number of people could be involved in the ritual if a larger beast were used. Neither was beef rejected by Muslims as a foodstuff. Cow slaughter had been one important trigger for Hindu–Muslim riots for the last four decades.[127] Nevertheless, the symbolism of the cow was perhaps too great to be ignored by

[126] Pandey, *Construction of Communalism*, pp. 92–4. On a day-to-day level, religious sentiment in UP meant that cows were allowed to wander freely through towns and villages, and were not killed when they got old – a situation which the British criticised as 'a drain on resources'. *Report of the UP Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee*, vol. I (Allahabad, 1929), pp. 15–17.

[127] Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism*, pp. 158–200. Cow slaughter had been the cause of Hindu–Muslim rioting across eastern UP and Bihar in the 1890s and 1910s: 'cow protection propaganda had been exceedingly effective in mobilising large sections of the "Hindu" community against a small and isolated Muslim community,' p. 200.

the nationalist ideologue: the concept of 'mother cow' could be twinned with the often used depictions of 'Mother India' and the life-giving, pure quality of cow's milk could be associated in the minds of audiences with the purity and strength of the nation, not to mention the strength of the Congress.[128]

Cow protection or cow slaughter were rarely used as solitary issues with which to drum up support. In most cases, they were one of an orator's weapons to illustrate the moral degradation and cruelty of the government. The protection of the cow was a common theme used in cross-reference with other notions of pollution, or as a metaphor for the life-giving nation. Or it was used as a symbol of the fragility and vulnerability of community – an idea that was linked to scares about Hindu communal strength and integrity. A large number of speeches therefore simply referred to the numbers of cattle destroyed by the British.[129] Where references to cows became more specific, the foreigner's moral failings were related to the impurity of foreign cloth, claimed to be tainted with the fat or blood of cows. An attempt to broaden the effect of the appeal of pollution was shown by the frequent inclusion in these claims of the use of pig's fat. However, this inclusion seemed in a large number of cases to have been little more than a concession, as the argument about pigs was never extended to cover as many themes as the cow, and complaints about pig fat in foreign articles were rarely used by Muslim Congressmen. Indeed, the talk about cow slaughter automatically led to comparisons between the 'foreignness' of the British and that of the Muslims.

Accusations about the scale of cattle slaughtered by the British were often couched in similar terms to rhetoric about mass genocide. Numbers were used to heighten the cruelty of the perpetrators of the crime. For example, in a City Congress meeting in Agra on 14 June 1930, Hari Narayan and Narayan Lal Bohra described how the British were killing cows in their thousands every year. A similar theme was characteristic of meetings in the biggest urban centre of the province: in Kanpur, in the first week of September, Raj Narayan estimated that Europeans alone had slaughtered 44,000 cows. In Bhedpur, Etawah, on 19 September, one Ram Dutt speaking at a Congress gathering, claimed that the government was responsible for the death of 3 crores of cows.[130] The production

128 This association between Bharat Mata and the cow, in this case tethered, is again clearly illustrated in the poster by Prabhu Dayal, *Bharatoddar* (Kanpur, 1930). P.P.Hin.F.58 IOR. See front cover.

129 Speech of Lala Sukhbir Singh, 10 April, 1921 'Anti cow-killing movement in UP', 1920, GAD Box 138 file 214/1921 UPSA. 'There are 70,000 British troops in India and 7,000 tons of beef are supplied to them in one year.'

130 PAI 28 June, 27 September, 1930.

of these figures served as a method for highlighting the magnitude of the government's cruelty.[131] It was also an attempt to focus the minds of the audience on the essential alienness of the British presence in India, and was linked to its other failings. This was attempted by Jaleshar Nath in Basti in the first week of February, when he linked the dishonesty of the government to the fact that they ate cow's flesh. Meat-eating and forms of consumption were focused on to explain personality traits, loss of control over the passions and corruption. The notion of decadence through consumption obviously played upon brahmanical ideas and popular 'Hindu' associations with vegetarianism. Yet, curiously, at the same time the fate of the cow was not considered to be a subject outside the remit of the colonial state, unlike the religious festival. The cow had an agricultural and scientific significance. Again, the dialogue with government was critical, especially at a local level, where municipalities and districts could rule on questions of cow slaughter. In Agra, on 18 March, Malkhan Singh – a Congress leader from Aligarh – presided over a meeting in which Badan Singh criticised the government for not creating legislation for the prevention of cow slaughter.[132]

Containing themes of a control over passion and consumption, references to cow slaughter were also used directly to discipline mass demonstrations organised by Congressmen. The activity or non-activity of participants in a Congress satyagraha could be sanctioned by playing on mass fear or belief about the sin of cow killing. For example, on 17 February 1931, a complaint reached the Deputy Commissioner of Rae Bareli, from a zamindar of Sidhwana, that there had been Congress-induced violence on his estate. The zamindar had decided to have Congress flags removed from one of his villages, whereupon a number of Congress supporters gathered around the flags to protect them. Eventually the zamindar's men forcibly removed the flags. A successful counter-offensive to re-site the flags was achieved after Congress leaders in the crowd raised a shout that the village crowd would be 'committing the sin of killing cows' if they drew back.[133]

Most commonly, accusations about cow slaughter were linked to the use of animal products in mill cloth. Here the stress was less on the idea of criminal mass slaughter than on claims that the conscious use of cloth containing cow products would be ritually polluting. Cloth and clothing had their own set of symbolic and ritual signs, which will be

[131] Speech of Anand Prakash, 14 April 1921, 'Anti cow-killing movement in UP', 1920, GAD Box 138 file 214/1921 UPSA.
[132] PAI 15 February, 29 March 1930.
[133] The Deputy Commissioner of Rae Bareli to the Commissioner of Lucknow Division, 20 February 1931 Home Poll. file 14/21 (1307) 1931 NIA.

explored in the following chapter. In general, the religious sanctions on foreign cloth added an extra dimension to Congress's foreign boycotts and the link to cow products was frequently made by publicists. Swami Muktanand was a prolific speaker and pamphleteer on the pollution of government cow products.[134] Although cow fat reportedly polluted foreign cloth in the main, it was said to be present in other manufactures. In a speech at Kharkhanda in Meerut district, on 23 April, Manohar Lal claimed that it was used in foreign medicines and other speakers referred to its use in cigarette gum. Several orators claimed that the use of animal fat in the manufacture of cloth represented a planned attack on religion in India. The appeal was made to both Hindus and Muslims. At Chilkhana in Saharanpur district, on 1 April, Mukand Singh claimed that the government had 'spoiled our religion' by using the fat of pigs and cows in clothes. However, the arguments that highlighted attacks on religion in general were usually delivered by Hindu religious leaders, in contexts where the audience would have been predominantly Hindu. Swami Raghunand, speaking in Muzaffarnagar in April, was one such spokesman, claiming that the use of foreign cloth spoiled by cow fat defiled religion.[135]

Throughout 1930 and 1931 criticism of foreign cloth on the basis of ritual pollution was continually used in Congress's boycott campaigns. In the summer of 1930 it provided a popular theme in Bijnor, Etawah, Gorakhpur, Muzaffarnagar and Banaras. In most of these places it was noticeable that the champions of this type of rhetoric were usually speakers of local rather than provincial prominence: Chhote Lal and Baghubir Singh in Etawah, Swami Azad in Muzaffarnagar and Swami Sharananand in western UP generally. This meant that cow protection and ritual pollution, like the invocation of the *Ramayana*, were themes that took on a varied and locally specific set of meanings. Yet, like the use of epics, there was a parallel process of homogenisation, as the theme connected local rhetoric to the province and nation: cow protection was still a movement sanctioned at the highest levels of Congress. In July 1932, writing about the Satyagraha Ashram, Gandhi wrote that 'The Ashram believes in goraksha [cow protection] as a religious duty.'[136] Key UP cities were at the forefront of the political style: Banaras was also an important centre in July 1931. In the second week of that month, several Hindu processions were organised by Ram Anugarh Sharma, one of them reportedly ten thousand strong. On 17 July this procession carried Congress flags

[134] See Chaturvedi, *Rajyakranti Aur Bharatiy,* PIB 27/24 IOR.
[135] PAI 12 April, 3 May, 10 May, 7 June 1930.
[136] *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. L, p. 229.

and a number of participants wore the uniform of the Mahabir Dal. Most of the speeches dealt with the often combined issues of khadi and cow protection.[137]

Inevitably, the overlap of the issue of foreign cloth, foreignness and cow slaughter led to discussions about the position of Muslims in relation to cow protection. This came about through the on-going issue of Hindu–Muslim unity, or attempts to highlight the ignorance of the British Raj compared to Mughal rulers on the question of cow slaughter. A more direct approach was to condemn all cow slaughter, both British and Muslim. In some cases, bringing Muslims into the debate was undoubtedly an attempt to heal the anticipated communal wound. However, the repetitiveness of the cow slaughter question actually strengthened those Muslim pressure groups calling for a rejection of the proposed schemes to ban slaughter in the province. It heightened awareness of 'Muslim rights' in relation to animal slaughter and essentialised the Muslim response through the UP press, rather than bringing about a communal rapprochement on the basis of a new-found Muslim understanding of Hindu fears.

This was the result of how the issue of cow slaughter and the Muslim role in it were presented. Where Hindu–Muslim unity was discussed alongside cow protection or cow slaughter, the latter was usually given prominence and used as a means by which unity might be achieved.[138] An example of this can be seen again in a typical political presentation of the iniquities of slaughter: in January, February and March of 1930, Chittu Pande made regular slide-show presentations in Ballia. In these the prevention of cow slaughter was seen as an important first step towards the creation of Hindu–Muslim understanding. The slide-shows attempted to draw the onus of cow slaughter away from Indian Muslims by giving details of cow slaughtering in foreign countries. The gruesome pictures probably alerted Hindu audiences to how similar things might be practised in their backyard in Muslim areas of slaughter. During the Kumbh Mela in 1930, a similar attempt was made to divert attention away from cow slaughter performed by Indian Muslims. There, Narbada Prasad Singh said that seven lakhs of cows were killed every year in India: one lakh for Muslims, two for the British and four for dyeing cloth. He concluded by remarking that if Indians stopped using foreign cloth they would win swaraj and save seven lakhs of cows. Although the intentions

[137] PAI 5 July, 19 July, 26 July, 23 August 1930, 25 July 1931.

[138] 'Anti cow-killing movement in UP', GAD Box 138 file 214/1921 UPSA. In the speeches presented in this file there was a tendency to minimise Muslim cow slaughter and to highlight that of Europeans.

were probably to save the face of Muslims, the implication of these remarks was that the boycott of foreign cloth was also part of a crusade to prevent all groups from slaughtering cows, since dyeing only accounted for four of the seven lakhs of cows slaughtered.[139]

Other speakers attempted to win over Muslim opinion by praising the relative 'enlightenment' of past Muslim rulers with regard to cow slaughter. In Khair, in Aligarh district, it was reported that Shiv Charan Lal and Todar Singh, the prominent Aligarh Congress leader, praised old Muslim rulers for not allowing the sale of bullocks. These historical references should be seen in the context of and alongside other political languages about the tyranny of Aurangzeb which, like the comments concerning Akbar's syncretism, were largely colonial notions of Mughal history. This made the comparison between the two phases of foreign or 'imperial' rule more natural. At Meerut, in August, the Congress agent Prittu Singh claimed that more cows were slaughtered under British rule than in the Mughal period. In Bareilly, on 10 May, Sahib Singh stated that the English had actually taught Muslims to slaughter cows.[140] However, the claims of beneficent Muslim rule in the past on the subject of cow slaughter was only an argument of degrees. The primary crime was still the killing of cattle, again heightening the awareness that Muslims continued to slaughter creatures revered as sacred by Hindus.

More direct popular approaches to the problem of cow slaughter explicitly brought Muslims into the picture alongside the British. At Pauni in Naini Tal district, in April 1931, Madan Mohan Kula eulogised the work of Gandhi by declaring that during the time of the Muslims and the English, nine crores of cows were slaughtered. At Nayaganj in Agra, on 19 September, a Congressman declared that the national struggle was simply one between cows on the one side and butchers on the other. In some cases, speakers came out into the open with remarks about the way in which it had become very difficult to drum up support for the view that the British were more 'guilty' than Muslims in the crime of cow slaughter. Jai Tara Chatterji, speaking at Mawan in Meerut on 1 June, was realistic about the communal tangle involved in cow slaughter. He complained that when a Muslim killed cows hundreds of Hindus would lay down their lives, but that the same would never happen in instances of slaughter by the government.[141]

The result of the use of cow-related propaganda was not just a heightening of support for civil disobedience but also an intensification of communal conflict on the basis of the cow slaughter question. In April 1931

[139] PAI 8 February, 5 April 1930. [140] *Ibid.*, 29 March, 24 May 1930.
[141] *Ibid.*, 27 September, 14 June 1930; 18 April, 1931.

there were several incidents in the rural area of Allahabad and Hardoi districts involving cows and cow slaughter, the latter place involving the boycott of Muslim butchers by dhobis.[142] Neither was the timing of this kind of agitation on the basis of cow slaughter particularly propitious. In January 1930 there had been intensive campaigning and a number of mass meetings objecting to proposed legislation to prevent cow sacrifice.[143] At Banaras on 14 January, a mass meeting was held in the town hall, at which Muhammad Ashraf protested against the stoppage of cow sacrifice. At Hardoi a leaflet was posted in the city entitled 'Muslim Brothers be Careful', calling on Muslims to oppose the Sarda Act and the ban on cow sacrifice. In Shahjahanpur, on 17 January, a five-hundred-strong procession was finished off with speeches, one of which requested the government to veto the bill pending in the Legislative Assembly for the prohibition of cow sacrifice. Similar protests continued throughout February in Bahraich, Etah, Faizabad, Lucknow, Hardoi, Moradabad, Pilibhit, Rae Bareli and Saharanpur.[144]

Despite the attempts of several Congress publicists in UP to highlight the enlightened aspects of Mughal rule, the rhetoric involving the sanctity of the cow in India failed to achieve a cross-communal national response. Instead, references to cow slaughter, the presence of cow fat in foreign cloth, and the cruelty of the European foreigners in relation to this, could only have served to build on Muslim paranoia about exclusion from the 'idea' of the Indian nation created by this religious idiom. This was despite attempts on the part of Hindu Congressmen to include the mention of pig fat alongside cow fat. The controversy surrounding the cow was probably too entrenched for a new, liberal view of kine slaughter to emerge in the popular imagination.[145] Just as the cow defiled the British trade in cloth, so, by extension, it defiled those UP Muslims who still believed in the necessity of cow sacrifice during Bakr-Id. The repeated accusations that foreign cloth contained cow fat, and that cow products were used in a number of other processes and western products, did little to overcome the difficulties of the UP Congress in drawing Muslims into the

[142] *Leader* (Allahabad), 18, 20, 21 April 1931.

[143] *Ibid.*, 24 January 1930. The resolutions moved in the Central Legislative Assembly for the banning of cow slaughter for non-religious purposes came from a Hindu communal angle rather than the Congress. However, the proposals were vocally supported by individuals associated with the Congress, like Malaviya. The looser Congress references to cow fat and cow slaughter would also have been related to this legislation.

[144] PAI 25 January, 1 February, 15 February 1930.

[145] From the late 1920s, it was a regular occurrence, especially during Bakr-Id, for a Hindu–Muslim riot to flare up somewhere in the province over cow slaughter. For example, in 1926 there were four separate riots in the space of two weeks in June, in Allahabad, Fatehpur and Bara Banki districts. 'Statement of Communal Riots in the UP, 1922–1927', L/PJ/6/1890 IOR.

cloth boycotts, and through this into the civil disobedience movement as a whole.

Congressmen and their supporters used religious rhetoric, festivals and developed notions of ritual practices in political action for diverse reasons. The most important overall motivation was the creation of a strategy to overcome and compete with a foreign government and administration. The creation of a mass movement, and of a party to direct it, required the consolidation of power in each locality, discipline and a sense of duty towards a very specific aim. Religion provided a way into all of these requirements: power was evoked in the use of Hindu epics and the deification of leaders; discipline was created by the use of religious sanctions and declarations of ritual pollution. Duty was assured by a mutual devotion to both a religious faith and a political organisation. Strategically, religion and religious imagery could also be used to depict the cultural and spiritual sterility of the west and thereby illegitimise the presence of the British in India. However, it would be simplistic to suggest that the place of religion in nationalist politics was understood in a uniform sense by all groups and castes in UP. Nandini Gooptu has shown that 'Gandhian' concepts such as 'renunciation' would not necessarily have appealed to the urban poor of UP, who were increasingly attracted to 'martial' versions of Hinduism in the inter-war period.[146] On the other hand, the appearance of common rhetorical themes across the provinces suggests that there was also a process of symbolic homogenisation, which broke down locally specific traditions. This meant that even Gandhian non-violence, through a fluid use of religious symbolism in political language, could be associated with more militant forms of Hindu identification.

Along the way, the invocation of religious thought and practice in political activity had a number of other practical and conceptual benefits. Temples and religious festivals provided a kind of infrastructure for political agitation, in which large numbers could be reached at once. Moreover, use of religious space was a natural consequence of the dialogic and interlacing symbolic religious themes. Festivals such as Holi and Dasehra allowed propagandists to combine the spectacle of the festival itself with political activity and protest. Congress's message was also made more exciting and palatable by the often entertaining and theatrical exploits of some of the itinerant preachers and sadhus. Certain religious environments allowed the Congress to target specific social groups, like the Parivrajak Mahamandal during the Kumbh Mela. The association of Congress's civil disobedience with religious authority also gave the

[146] Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor.*

organisation a sense of divine right. The aims of Congress and the nation, then, were easily conflated and frequently conceived in terms of a devotion to a spiritual ideal.

Congress supporters found themselves unable to operate in Muslim religious environments with the same enthusiasm. Timorous attempts were made to spread propaganda during Muslim festivals, but such occasions were never turned into political rallies in the same way as Holi. Neither was Islam, or the religious imagery of the Muslims, linked so explicitly to representations of the nation. Muslim Congressmen did attempt to make use of religion in their public rhetoric.[147] However, Islamic symbolism was much more rarely invoked for reasons of political mobilisation, and there appeared to be a clearer sense, in the actions of leaders at least, of the separation between private and public religious activity. Where Muslim groups did engage with mobilisation at a popular level in the early 1930s, it was perhaps more commonly through an acceptance or engagement with the Hindu idiom. This situation was encouraged by the wide range of symbolic themes which linked together all levels of political life in UP. Muslim defensiveness about the provenance of Islam in India naturally related to minority status, but a minority identity that set itself against this context of Congress politics.

Congress's associations with religion and religious imagery derived from Hindu sources had a long-term impact on attempts to draw Muslims into the organisation. Although Congressmen were willing to translate the religious energies of all sectional groups into a new kind of devotion based on the nation, that devotion depended for its content on what was believed to be the true, unified cultural and religious heritage of India. For most UP Congressmen that was a conception derived more clearly from ideas about Hinduism. The interconnected symbolic idioms outlined above reinforced the sense of Hinduism as a concrete set of cultural values. The ultimate effect was to make some of Congress's specific agitations appear to be communally motivated. Most members of the Congress in UP assumed that the use of religious rhetoric, infrastructures and institutions would, when applied to nationalism, have an assimilative effect. This assumption ignored the past decade of communal bitterness which itself had been partly driven by the Mahasabha's Hindu populism.

The methods which had been used to propagate Congress boycotts and campaigns – festivals, Hindu epics, sadhus and imagery surrounding

147 Mushirul Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims Since Independence* (London, 1997), pp. 10–11. Maulana Kalam Azad spoke of 'a noble event in history': the fusion of Islamic and Hindu cultural currents into a common nationality.

the cow – did not saturate Congress activity by any means. But their appearance was regular enough for associations to be formed between ideas of Hindu domination and the agitations themselves. This association accounted for the stubborn resistance of Muslims in important cities throughout the province to join Congress agitators in the cloth boycotts and general hartals. It was to be an extremely important early signal of Muslim estrangement from the Congress in the late 1930s. The foreign-cloth boycotts and campaigns for the uplift of untouchables were two areas in which Muslim resistance especially manifested itself, and they will be explored in chapter 3.

3 Muslims, mass movements and untouchable uplift

> the rallying of all communities under the banner of independence will automatically remove all obstacles in the way of a satisfactory solution of all communal questions (Motilal Nehru, 7 May 1930).[1]

The religious rhetoric, language and organisation highlighted in chapter 2 showed how a number of UP Congressmen made a subtle but decisive connection between the Indian nation and the experience of being a 'Hindu'. For some Congressmen, this was simply an unspoken assumption. For others, Hinduism contained a natural toleration and inclusiveness that facilitated national unification and cultural and religious absorption. A sense of 'Hindu unity' was part of a foundation myth – based upon less concrete, but broad principles of assimilation. There was a qualitative difference between this broad array of positions within the UP Congress and the 'hard' ideology of the 1930s' Hindu Mahasabha of Savarkar which explicitly set out the connection between 'Hindutva' (Hindu-ness) and the nation. However, it is apparent that UP Muslims noticed associations between sections of the UP Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha. There were key points of contact, particularly in notions of the 'secular' nation as a solution for India's societal diversity. Indeed, as the words of Nehru above suggest, for many the future state as imagined by the Congress, perhaps through the engine of 'Hindu' civilisational toleration, would put a final end to all communalism.

The interplay and relationships between ideological positions and political languages concerning the 'Hindu' were subtle, as the last chapter set out. But because they often operated through the Congress, they pervaded diverse political arenas. A cursory glance at the activities of the Congress organisation in UP in the early and mid-1930s would tell a story of the rise of left-wing politics; campaigns expressly denying the importance of communal identity; attempts to forge alliances with political forces of labour; and publicity explicitly targeting the economic logic of imperialism. However, even in these areas, a constant definition and

[1] *Leader* (Allahabad), 9 May 1930.

redefinition of the Indian nation was still apparent. And discussion of the nation ultimately related to religious and communal identity – the relationship being continually reiterated by nationalist and imperialist alike: it was no accident that Motilal Nehru made a direct link between the 'communal problem' and national independence. Against the background of the political languages and idioms described in the last chapter, then, ostensibly secular movements repeatedly became entwined with questions of religious identity and antagonism.

Two Congress campaigns of the early 1930s provide repeated evidence that ostensibly non-sectarian, non-religious political activity could acquire a religious and communal significance: the foreign-cloth boycotts and the campaigns for the uplift of untouchables between 1930 and 1934. Cloth boycott was a response to one of the most significant elements of India's imperial trade and a method of mobilising town and country. Although the use of cloth had always been connected to ritual exchange and practice in north India, there was no necessary reason why, as a movement, boycott should have acquired a communal significance. Untouchable uplift was not ostensibly acommunal, but anti-communal. Its motivation was rejection of colonial attempts to categorise Indian communities. Its aim was materially and educationally to improve the lot of hitherto suppressed sections of north Indian society. Both movements, in different ways, but for overlapping reasons, provoked Muslim reactions.

Muslim responses to cloth boycott varied a great deal between the towns of UP, and in many cases related to commercial rather than communal competitiveness. Where the boycotts did produce communal reactions there were discernible similarities in the kinds of complaints voiced. Theoretical and practical reasons for Muslim estrangement can be identified. In theory, the more aggressive of the foreign-cloth hartals, which in the manner of other protests during civil disobedience were laced with religious rhetoric, seemed to demonstrate the political strength of Hindus as a community, not just the strength of the Congress. This was a product of the interplay of cloth symbolism and the particular context of commercial advantage. As the use of religious imagery in itself created an antithesis between native and foreigner, politically conscious Muslims often felt themselves to be represented as a non-native culture in India. The practical misgivings surrounding the cloth boycott were equally compelling. As most of the Congress volunteers involved in the hartals were Hindu, the agitation was perceived to be targeting the Muslim cloth traders who held out against boycott. This fear was strengthened by evidence in cities like Banaras, where Hindu merchants were able to enter into pacts with Congress volunteers for damage limitation on their own foreign stocks. In Allahabad, Kanpur and Banaras, cloth boycott set up a vicious circle

of communal estrangement. Some Muslim traders were cautious of the hartal, partly because of the way it was presented. Once excluded, their drop in the share of trade could be highlighted as a Hindu conspiracy.

The idea that the cloth boycott had been another attempt to assert 'Hindu power' by Congress was enhanced by two developments in late 1930 and 1931. Firstly, the supposed demonstrations of Hindu political clout in the hartals were partly responsible for the subsequent reappearance of a purely Muslim volunteer organisation – the Tanzeem movement. The organisation and activities of Tanzeem mirrored those of Congress volunteers. Secondly, the perceived 'communal' orientation of foreign-cloth boycotts was heightened by the riots of early 1931 at Banaras, Kanpur, Agra and Mirzapur. Those in Banaras and Kanpur were triggered by Muslim resistance to Congress picketing. The occurrence of such serious Hindu–Muslim rioting on the day after Gandhi's 'Delhi Pact' with Viceroy Irwin – considered a triumph by Congress grass-roots opinion – provided another overlap between the UP Congress activity and communal aggression in the minds of British political observers.[2]

On the surface, the untouchable uplift movement in 1932 and 1933 was largely unrelated to the cloth boycott of the previous year. However, insofar as cloth boycott was viewed by Muslims in towns like Kanpur as a method of Hindu domination, the uplift movement provoked a similar fear, this time through the reform and reconstruction of 'Hindu society'. Again, as was seen with the renewed attempts to discuss cow slaughter and ritual pollution, historical memory played a part in the overall meaning of uplift for Muslims. This was a history in which colonial notions of community and difference formed a dialogue with Congress attempts to present Hinduism as cosmopolitan. The combination of these two sets of ideas and languages was critical to the eventual belief amongst many Muslims that Gandhi's fast essentially aimed to consolidate a Hindu political community. Attempts to bolster numerical communal strength had shaped Indian politics ever since the British had first enumerated the subcontinent's population by religion and caste.[3] Communal enumeration coincided with efforts to homogenise the Hindu population through social reform. One driving force behind the consolidation of Hindu society in the 1920s had been the Arya Samaj, which was responsible not only for campaigns for untouchable uplift but for the aggressive shuddhi or Hindu reclamation movement in the mid-1920s.[4] As an institution

[2] Montmorency to Hailey, 17 March 1931; 23 April 1931: Hailey Papers MSS.EUR.E. 220/20 IOR.
[3] Ludden, *Contesting the Nation*, pp. 1–19.
[4] Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*, pp. 230–9.

the Arya Samaj had become a focus for Muslim recrimination and fear, following the communal riots of the 1920s.[5] Congress involvement with untouchable uplift, in response to the Communal Award, created a direct link with the Arya Samaj in the minds of officials and Muslims.[6] It also inevitably allowed associations to form between Congress's constructive programme and a nefarious 'Hindu consolidation' or 'sangathan'. The UP Congress was further distanced from Muslim populations due to general suspicions about social reform, shown in the extensive Muslim opposition to the Sarda Act which attempted to restrain child marriages.[7] Overwhelming Congress support for this legislation, along with its social campaigns for untouchable uplift, enhanced conservative Muslim anxieties. Hindu traditionalists also opposed Gandhi's uplift movements, but the appearance of Muslim opposition at certain moments gave untouchable uplift a communal, rather than just a social-reform, dimension. This Muslim opposition was also the most significant, as it set itself up against an idea of a 'modernised' cosmopolitan sense of Hindu traditions which also embraced the secular.

Suspicions of ulterior motives for the sudden opposition to untouchability quickly arose and many questioned the motivations behind untouchable relief. The agitation was dropped once Gandhi had terminated his fast, even though the Mahatma himself maintained a personal commitment through the journal *Harijan*. Most importantly, local Congress leaders made no attempt to differentiate Congress's untouchable uplift from the on-going rhetoric for the elimination of caste conducted by the Arya Samaj. Also significant was the fact that uplift was considered to be a duty of high castes towards the 'depressed classes' – a project through which elites would 'admit' untouchables into Hinduism. Agency was therefore denied to some of the specifically 'depressed class' institutions in the movement. The suggestion here was that the stress was less upon alleviating the special difficulties of disadvantaged castes than on a broad attempt to bring untouchables back into the Hindu fold. Not only did the cloth boycott and untouchable uplift therefore reveal an ardent enthusiasm for general moves towards 'Hindu' consolidation, more specifically, they also apparently linked the UP Congress organisation with the motives and aims of communal institutions such as the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha.

[5] See, for example, the evidence provided in the official enquiry into the Kanpur riots: written evidence of Zakir Ali, 'Kanpur Enquiry Report', p. 423, L/PJ/7/75 IOR.

[6] This link was even more extensive than the associations created by political rhetoric. There were direct institutional overlaps, as will be demonstrated in chapter 4.

[7] Opposition to the Sarda Act dated from 1927. It was opposed well into the 1930s by Muslims and orthodox Hindus. Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 146.

Congress's relationship with these Hindu institutions was still apparent in the 1930s. The Arya Samaj, the Hindu Sabha and Congress shared resources and personnel in some districts – a theme which will be explored in the next chapter. However, on one level it was a Muslim belief that movements like cloth boycott and untouchable uplift had a hidden 'Hindu' agenda that artificially helped to generate a sense of communal bias. The character of nationalist imagery described in chapter 2 substantiated this Muslim belief. It did so precisely because of the interrelationship of notions and discourses of Congress cosmopolitanism, Arya Samaj-style social reform and colonial notions of discrete and competing religious communities. The breakdown of the old communal accommodations in the 1920s and particularly the events of 1928–9 surrounding the Nehru Report[8] account for the general Muslim reluctance to become involved with civil disobedience. But, in more specific contexts, the decisions made in the house of Motilal Nehru in 1928 cannot fully account for the dearth of Muslim participation in boycotts which aimed to reach all groups of Indians. As has been amply demonstrated by most of the work on UP politics in this period, there were great regional variations in Muslim politics and society from district to district. These variations reflected landownership patterns, the nature of historically powerful elites and population structures. We are dealing, therefore, with a province-wide phenomenon of Muslim estrangement, which nevertheless should be explained on the basis of local contexts and local responses to representations of the Congress and the Indian nation.

Local politics also had a bearing on the broader context. This situation was facilitated by the ease with which the symbolic resonance of cloth boycott and untouchable uplift, like the invocation of the *Ramayana*, could be transposed from local to provincial fields of political activity in UP. The first section of this chapter will therefore describe how far Muslim estrangement from civil disobedience was caused by the growing Muslim perception of a Hindu-dominated Congress in the early 1930s. Pandey has described how this Muslim perception related to Congress's institutional links with Hindu communal organisations. But, by a more

[8] Sarkar, *Modern India,* pp. 262–6. The All-Parties Conference of August 1928 in Lucknow finalised the Nehru Report, which made a number of concessions to the Hindu Mahasabha. There would be joint electorates everywhere, with reserved seats conceded only at the centre and in Muslim minority provinces. The political structure would be broadly unitary, with the centre keeping residual powers. This led Jinnah to describe the next conference in December, where compromise was rejected, as 'the parting of the ways'. Sarkar comments that this is an exaggeration since there were 'deeper socio-economic and ideological roots of the communal conflict'. Nevertheless, the 1928 breakdown 'did contribute considerably to the aloofness and positive hostility of most Muslim leaders towards civil disobedience'.

subtle process, the theory of a Hindu-dominated Congress was created by the 'style' of protests used during the cloth boycotts.

The progress of the foreign-cloth hartals across UP will then be examined in the context of the perceived 'Hindu' character of civil disobedience. This requires an analysis of how far Muslim estrangement was linked to either the symbolic meanings of ritually polluted cloth, or to the nature of Congress volunteer activity. Some Muslims in UP were marginalised by the organisational arrangements of the hartals – which were often based upon ideas and infrastructures which used religious rhetoric and spaces, as outlined in chapter 2. Others were antagonised by a general feeling of isolation that linked Congress's hartals to a disregard for the sectional interests of Muslims in UP. In Kanpur, Allahabad and Banaras, feelings of victimisation overlapped with fears of commercial advantage between cloth traders of different communities. The contribution of the cloth boycotts to the communal riots of 1931 in Kanpur and Banaras is central to an assessment of Congress's role in communal conflict in general. These riots were extremely important in developing a Muslim eagerness to encourage distinctly communal volunteer bodies like those of the Tanzeem movement.

The momentum of communal antagonism was to some extent deepened by the short-lived drive for untouchable uplift in 1932 and 1933. Overwhelming Congress support for the reform of society conflicted with a strong conservative lobby in UP (both Hindu and Muslim), which organised between January and June 1930 in opposition to the Sarda Act.[9] Consequently, Congress's overt associations with social reform were already a source of suspicion in influential, albeit conservative, Muslim political circles. But untouchable uplift had significance for wider groups of Muslims when it appeared to be a movement for communal consolidation rather than just social reform. The relationships between the UP Congress organisations in different districts and local Arya Samaj bodies and Hindu Sabhas were now given renewed publicity. The Sanatan Dharma (an orthodox Hindu organisation) continued to oppose Congress reformism. But its criticisms were never given the same communal edge as those articulated by Muslims agitating against Sarda and the perceived Congress sponsorship of Hindu communal regeneration.

Muslims and civil disobedience: perceptions of the Congress

Congress's approach to the Muslims during civil disobedience has been described in terms of an 'imperfect mobilisation' in which the context of

[9] *Brahman Maha Sammelan*, 29 March–5 April, 1930 UPNNR L/R/5/99 IOR.

the 1920s is crucial.[10] The launching of civil disobedience represented a new departure from years of relative political stagnation, marked by splits in the Congress movement. Seven years of severe communal rioting in towns as widespread as Saharanpur (1923), Lucknow (1924), Allahabad (1926) and Kanpur (1927)[11] had placed the Hindu–Muslim political alliance of non-cooperation – forged through the agency of the Khilafat agitation – into depressing perspective.[12] The disintegration of the united radical front in Congress had allowed disparate groups seeking political leverage to associate with the Hindu Sabha in Allahabad, Kanpur, Banaras, Saharanpur and other towns across western UP. From 1923 the Arya Samaj had reintroduced its campaign of shuddhi: religion had not only re-entered politics, but was helping in the redefinition of 'Hindu' society. The elections of 1926 in UP were marked by direct appeals to communal identity, spearheaded by a rejuvenated Hindu Mahasabha.[13] Disparate Muslim groups across UP were not predisposed to risk losing official encouragement for the sake of a Congress which had so recently been associated with Hindu communal parties.

But this context of the 1920s is not a sufficient explanation for Muslim estrangement from civil disobedience. Alongside the rhetoric of Congress nationalism, which drew upon religious themes, there were also continual attempts to bolster Muslim membership at the provincial level.[14] Yet the repeated attempts to win the support of UP Muslims reflected an anticipation of impending failure on that score, despite the fact that Congress had recruited some powerful Muslim spokesmen to make its arguments at exclusively Muslim meetings.[15] From an early stage in civil disobedience, Congress also had the backing of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema in Saharanpur and Moradabad, and later from the Firangi Mahal in Lucknow. Congress's apparent success in winning over an important section of the Muslim intelligentsia was deemed to be insufficient. Importantly, the fear of inadequate Muslim support was also a response to the now widespread Muslim recriminations which claimed that the Congress was acting only on behalf of Hindus and that its ultimate and true aims were the creation

10 Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, pp. 154–6.
11 Report of local government regarding the rioting in Lucknow 12–22 September 1924, L/PJ/6/1889 IOR; statement of communal riots in the UP in 1922–7, L/PJ/6/1890 IOR.
12 Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, pp. 48–67.
13 Gordon, 'The Hindu Mahasabha and the Indian National Congress, 1915–1926', pp. 187–91. In the 1926 elections the Hindu Mahasabha put forward candidates on its own behalf. The relationship with the Congress was perhaps best illustrated by Malaviya's creation of an Independent Congress Party with virtually the same platform as the Congress.
14 Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contacts Campaign', pp. 2273–5.
15 These included T. A. K. Sherwani, Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari, Hasrat Mohani, Husain Ahmad Madni and Muhammed Shafi.

of 'Hindu Raj'. The way Congress attempted to combat these Muslim accusations was itself highly revealing of the prevalent Congress attitude to communalism and sectional interests. Despite the use of nationalist rhetoric which stressed the ultimate unity of purpose, identity and culture of India, UP Congressmen were afraid of the potential appeal of a Muslim communal argument. This was noticed in the 1920s by the liberal Chintamani, who believed that opposition to separate electorates for Muslims 'would only confirm them in their views'.[16] It is possible that the UP Congress was aware of its own organisational amorphousness which, by including individuals representing Hindu nationalist ideas, could vindicate Muslim views. More concretely, the UP Congress was wary of the effect of communalism per se in the politics of UP. Motilal Nehru had deplored his own inability to use a broad nationalist approach in the 1926 elections in UP, which to him seemed to be more dictated by communal interests and religion in the rural areas: 'I have been fully denounced as a beef-eater and destroyer of cows, an opponent of prohibition, of music before mosques . . . I could only contradict this in public meetings but they permeated hamlets and villages which I could not reach.'[17]

UP Congressmen were therefore caught in a somewhat contradictory position. On the one hand, the message and political rhetoric of Congress stressed the essential unity of the Indian nation, irrespective of 'caste or creed'. The entire strategy behind the Independence Resolution of 1929 depended on a belief in that message of intrinsic unity.[18] On the other hand, the attempts to stifle Muslim communal accusations by winning them over reflected a silent appreciation of the power of communalism in politics.[19] This paradoxical position contributed to Muslim perceptions of the Congress as a party open to the corruption of communal sentiment, despite secularist pronouncements to the contrary. Little was being done to eliminate associations between Congressmen and Hindu communal organisations politically active in the 1920s: the Arya Samaj continued to provide an attraction for the activities of local Congress politicians, particularly in western UP. It was also apprehended by the Congress that the success of Muslim communalism would promote separatism within its own ranks, thereby encouraging those who sought to 'unify' using explicitly Hindu communal methods.

16 Chintamani to Sankaran Nair, 4 March 1925, Chintamani Papers NMML.
17 Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 28.
18 The Congress effectively denied the importance of 'the communal question' and in some respects ignored its existence. As Motilal Nehru had stated, complete independence was seen as the primary consideration, out of which all other social and political problems of India could be solved.
19 The 'Muslim mass contacts' campaign by its very title was an admission of the fact that Congress was prepared to appeal to communal instincts. See pp. 223–32.

In this light, it is clear that whereas the 1920s was an important decade in communal politics, Congress's position with UP Muslims was still fluid and changing rapidly. Civil disobedience from 1930 accelerated Muslim estrangement because of the political languages used to sustain it and the nature of its movements. Muslim responses to civil disobedience in UP reflected the fluidity of political alignments in north India between the wars. Political support for a party like Congress in the districts of UP often depended upon factional alignments and patronage, involving factors unconnected to community or religion.[20] Opposition to or support for the Congress were rarely very stable amongst Muslim populations. In most districts Muslims were apparently indifferent to civil disobedience and the Congress organisation, with smaller groups actively in support or opposition. The lack of Muslim militancy between 1930 and 1933 is indicated by the numbers of Muslims in Allahabad, Lucknow and Faizabad jails for offences in connection with the hartals – 9 out of 679 prisoners, 14 out of 1735 and 5 out of 140 respectively.[21] Muslim indifference signified that a good deal of Congress's seemingly firm Muslim support could not be taken for granted. There was of course large-scale indifference in some districts among Hindu populations too, but Muslim apathy certainly outweighed enthusiasm in the eyes of observers.[22] The most important distinction was this: Muslim estrangement was more often expressed in communal terms, in that civil disobedience was described as a 'Hindu' movement. Because of this, uncommitted Muslim constituencies were clearly open to more sectarian arguments, such as those of Shaukat Ali, brother of Mohammed Ali and a leading figure in the 'Young Party' in the UP Muslim League.

Shaukat Ali was perhaps the best-known Muslim spokesman to raise the question of whether or not the Muslim community as a whole should participate in civil disobedience. It is important to note the presentation of the Muslim community here as politically homogeneous – a position which encouraged Congress thinkers of the 1930s to regard Muslims as a 'single' community.[23] The sense of community betrayal expressed by

[20] P. R. Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh* (Berkely, 1965), p. 273.

[21] Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 112.

[22] Hailey to Crerar, 25 September 1930, Hailey Papers MSS.EUR.E.220/19B IOR.

[23] The roots of Shaukat Ali's position are understandable in the context of his leading role in the 'Young Party' of the League and his extremism during the Khilafat agitation of 1920. On 2 June of that year, in the face of conservative Hindu reticence towards the radicalism of the Khilafatists, Ali jumped up in support of the armed rising proposals of Hasrat Mohani: 'If any Moslem invader came for support of the Khilafat cause and punish the British [sic], the Mussalmans would join hands with them.' Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, pp. 314–15.

Shaukat Ali in 1930 must also be viewed in the context of events surrounding the extensive communal rioting in UP from 1923. A common Muslim view which emerged from this maelstrom of the 1920s, as in the 1880s and 1890s, was that, in order to function as a truly national organisation, the Congress needed continually to enter into dialogue with all religious communities. For Shaukat Ali, the Congress's declaration of complete independence on the eve of the Round Table talks involving a proposed settlement of 'the communal question' represented a complete break with the old tradition of consultation of Muslim opinion. Ali was aware that Muslim views in UP were by no means consolidated and he therefore aimed to create a Muslim bloc so that a 'Muslim angle' could be given a stronger voice. In 1928 and 1929 Shaukat had already been active disseminating anti-Congress propaganda in Kanpur, and had established the Tausih Jamiat ul-Ulema i Hind in opposition to the pro-Congress Deoband Jamiat.[24] At the end of March 1930 he arrived for an 'Old Boys' meeting of the University at Aligarh. He later spoke in the Jama Masjid at Koil, stressing the need for the consolidation of the Muslim community. His argument was very simple: if Gandhi and the Congress would not consider the point of view of Muslims across the province about their own political rights, then Muslims as a body should refuse to take part in civil disobedience.[25]

At the beginning of April 1930 a section of the Khilafat Committee made the same points, condemning the inconsistency of the Congress in the face of the riots of the 1920s in more detail. The statement of the committee on civil disobedience started by commenting that the Round Table Conference afforded the best opportunity for reaching a Hindu–Muslim settlement, but that Gandhi had rejected all efforts to enter into such a settlement. It was stated that Gandhi 'now claims to kill communalism merely by ignoring it', but that he was 'not killing communalism but subjecting the minority community to the communalism of the majority community'. In fact, it was believed that 'Real communalism masquerades as "nationalism" and safeguards against communalism itself are called "communalism".' To explain this seemingly insupportable proposition the statement went on to claim that Gandhi had not once indicated that the Nehru Report should be rejected because it was unfair to Muslims, and that instead he wrote in *Young India* that all should work for its acceptance. The statement concluded by paraphrasing Gandhi's own words about the requirements for successful civil disobedience. These were: 'discipline, self-restraint, a non-violent but resisting spirit, cohesion and above all scrupulous and willing obedience to the known laws of God'.

[24] Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 135. [25] PAI 29 March 1930.

Yet, retorted the Khilafat spokesmen, we daily see a breach of 'God's laws' in the violence between Hindus and Muslims.[26]

But neither the views of Shaukat Ali, nor those of the truncated Khilafat Committee, are a sufficient explanation for the level and nature of Muslim reactions to civil disobedience. There were other Muslim parties in UP who were in fact quite ready to join with the Congress during civil disobedience, provided efforts were first made to help remove the 'communal differences' which had surfaced in the previous decade. Again, the responsibility for action was placed in Congress's court. At a meeting of the district Muslim League in Lucknow on 21 April 1930, in the Rifah-i-Am hall, resolutions were passed in favour of joint electorates and foreign-cloth boycott. However, it was also resolved that dominion status should be the goal of India, as she was not ready for complete independence. Ali Sagir summed up by saying that the future of the nation depended on the removal of communal differences, and that this action ultimately depended on the Hindu community. A similar opinion was expressed at the meeting of the All-India Shia Political Conference on the same date. That organisation aimed to work for immediate dominion status and the protection of 'Islamic and Shia religious rights', 'Islamic culture and civilisation'.[27]

A number of Muslim groups expressed caution, then, about civil disobedience – a caution which the Congress was invited to assuage. For a number of politically conscious Muslims in UP, it was not that the principle of civil disobedience was objectionable. Rather, there was a fear of being bullied into a movement in which there had been no real consultation of Muslim opinion. Objections therefore involved the implicitly dictatorial attitude of the Congress in embarking on civil disobedience. As will be argued in later sections of this chapter, the often coercive actions of the cloth boycotters reinforced that view of the Congress. A pro-government Muslim lobby in Allahabad expressed these ideas, again with reference to the happenings of the 1920s. A meeting in the city was organised on 1 May 1930, attended by Zahur Ahmad, Mohammed Husain, and Dr Shafaat Ahmad Khan, and presided over by Maulana Vilayat Husain. It was decided to broadcast signatured copies of a handbill which stated that shuddhi, sangathan, the Nehru Report and music before mosques had served to severely injure Muslim feelings. The notice concluded by saying that civil disobedience had been launched without consulting the Muslim community and ignored the demands of Muslims in various places. No Muslim should therefore take part in the movement until safeguards were guaranteed for the Muslim community.

[26] *Leader* (Allahabad), 5 April 1930. [27] *Ibid.*, 25 April 1930.

This point of view seemed to have gained a more widespread acceptance within the city on the following day. At a large meeting at Bakshi bazaar in Allahabad, Purushottam Das Tandon spoke on civil disobedience, but was continuously heckled and shouted down by Muslims demanding that he answer questions about the Hindu Mahasabha and the Nehru Report.[28]

These views formed the background to Muslim leaders' perceptions of Congress. But their political significance was only triggered when Congress failed to distance itself from images and institutions of Hindu nationalism. Shaukat Ali, the Khilafatists and the disparate and weakened Muslim League organisations feared that the UP Congress organisation itself might be communally prejudiced. Even as late as 1930, with ulema support, both central and provincial Congresses were in a position to refute this image. Nevertheless, by 1931 talk about a 'Hindu Mahasabha spirit' or the ultimate aim of the Congress as being 'Hindu Raj' was common. There were two psychological principles at the bottom of these accusations against the Congress. Firstly, an implicit link was made between apparently coercive activities like the cloth hartals and the rhetoric of Hindu nationalists calling for a 'rule of the majority'. A large amount of the religious rhetoric outlined in the last chapter – the depiction of the nationalist struggle in mythical terms, the tying of public religious festivals to protests – championed notions of the absorbency of 'Hindu' civilization. This was made possible due to the dialogic way in which the apparent secularism of political agents' utterances about a civic national identity engaged with popular Hindu themes on the one hand, and with colonial notions of community on the other. For many Muslims the inter-relationship between these symbolic themes made it very difficult to separate out the religious from the secular in movements such as cloth boycott. Secondly, overlaps in policy and personnel of the Congress and organisations like the Arya Samaj were recognised, particularly where links were made between shuddhi and Hindu reform movements such as untouchable uplift.

Consequently, critical Muslim commentaries on the Congress talked in terms of the outright subordination of non-Hindus and was articulated as a riposte to Congress's nationalist imagery. For example, in the middle of May 1930, at a meeting in Aligarh attended by Shaukat Ali and Shafi Daudi, pronouncements were made on the Congress in which it was claimed that Gandhi had been won over by the Hindu Mahasabha. This was supported by Abdul Majid Budauni in Allahabad.[29] Other Muslim

[28] PAI 10 May 1930; *Leader* (Allahabad), 3 May 1930.
[29] PAI 17 May 1930; *Leader* (Allahabad), 21 May 1930.

representations of the Congress drew upon the symbolism of the Hindu epics, as described in the last chapter. Clearly, the diverse textual readings of these epics had been homogenised through a form of synthesis in Congress activity, which linked religious rhetoric with religious environment and themes of ritual pollution. In Kanpur, at the end of June 1930, a leaflet printed by one Haji Muhammed Kumar-ud-din was widely distributed, entitled 'Congress and Muslims'. It warned Muslims against joining the Congress, as the aim of the latter was simply 'Ram Raj'. Another response to the Congress rhetoric described in chapter 2 made the parallel between British and Muslim 'foreign' rule. Speaking in Bombay on 21 April, Maulvi Mohammed Yakub condemned civil disobedience and claimed that it aimed at both the destruction of the present foreign government and the descendants of the former foreign rulers. By drawing upon colonial notions of Mughal government to create a symbolism imbued with historical consciousness, Congress had effectively opened the eyes of Muslim groups to this bald comparison between British and Muslim empire. This extreme form of Muslim opposition to the Congress, as represented by Maulvi Mohammad Yakub, often bordered on violent civil conflict. In Ghazipur city on 12 May, loudspeakers were set up which delivered the message that Muslims should not join the civil disobedience movement. Passing Hindus interrupted this broadcast with shouts of 'Gandhi ki jai'. These exclamations were in turn countered by Muslims with shouts of 'Allah O Akhbar'.[30]

Muslim spokesmen used national histories comparable to the 'Hindu civilisation' references in Congress and Arya Samaj meetings. These too were a response to colonial notions which privileged the historical 'importance' of particular religious communities. Yet they were also directed specifically against a Congress symbolism that had incorporated ideas about national origins. These ideas related in a dialogic way to debates about the historical provenance of India's empires and civilisations appearing in British histories of the subcontinent. Abdul Majid Budauni evoked a sense of the Muslims' past political supremacy to justify Muslim non-involvement in the Independence Day celebrations of 25 January. Speaking in Basti, he dwelt on the past glories of Indian Muslims, using history to argue that Muslims should 'remain aloof' from Independence Day.[31] The sense of religious separatism, coupled with past political and historical glory, also reflected the Khilafatist position of the non-cooperation days. Then the ulama of the Firangi Mahal in Lucknow associated with Abdul Bari had argued that 'if there is any danger of

[30] PAI 24 May 1930; 28 June 1930. *Leader* (Allahabad), 23 April 1930.
[31] PAI 25 April 1930.

infidels gaining possession of the holy places, all Muhammadans must fight'.[32] Another feature of this anti-Congress propaganda involved a Muslim defence against what appeared to be a homogenising movement. In some cases this was the result of a firmly established political and cultural identity. For the Shia Conference, Syed Kalbi Abbas of Rae Bareli dwelt upon the distinct and separate role of Shias in building up the Mughal empire.[33]

Instead of presenting a secular front, Congress's tactic was to attempt to win over Muslims by appealing to a similar sentiment based on civilisational and communal themes. Muslim Congressmen took the lead. In March and April 1930 Ata Ullah Bukhari addressed meetings across the province, deploring the 'harm' that Muslims were doing to their 'community' by not taking part in politics. In the same months a concerted Congress campaign targeted Muslims in Firozabad, Bareilly, Banaras, Najibabad, Faizabad, Ghaziabad, Mirzapur, Mathura, Pilibhit and Saharanpur districts.[34] However, this campaign came at an inopportune moment, at the height of the foreign-cloth hartal, which in many districts would create further Muslim disillusionment with Congress.

With the exception of cities like Lucknow where there were strong pro-Congress Muslim organisations like Firangi Mahal, it seemed that Congress's open-ended tactic, using mass meetings, an apparently inclusivist propaganda and the broad arena of the popular religious festival, was unable to overcome Muslim indifference or opposition. In local contexts, the operation of political patronage might create Muslim support for the Congress, since political power in the districts could follow patterns of factional alliance rather than caste or community.[35] However, the tactics of civil disobedience were designed to overcome the limitations of formalised political structures such as district and village Congress organisations, local bodies and councils or separate electorates. Persistent attempts to remind Muslims of their 'patriotic duty', coupled with aggressive and sometimes intrusive foreign boycotts, vindicated the fears of uncommitted Muslims. The similarities between this political bluntness and an opposition to the special political position of UP Muslims articulated by Hindu politicians were too great to be ignored. An important Congress leader in Kanpur summed up the situation perfectly. Speaking in Shraddhanand Park on 9 March 1930, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi condemned Shaukat Ali for declaring that the present agitation was anti-Muslim. Vidyarthi declared that when freedom was obtained there

[32] Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, p. 293. [33] PAI 28 June 1930.
[34] *Leader* (Allahabad), April 1930. 'Appointment of Muslim propapagnadists', AICC file G-44/1930 NMML.
[35] Harold A. Gould, *Politics and Caste* (Delhi, 1988), p. 34.

would be no consideration of claims on religious grounds.[36] This reflected an official Congress line which was becoming increasingly influential: political independence and the assertion of swaraj must be antecedent to all communal claims. Separatism could not exist within a sovereign independent state. The intentions of Congressmen like Motilal Nehru and Ganesh Vidyarthi were unselfconsciously secular. In the minds of cautious UP Muslims, and in the face of the UP Congress's nationalist imagery, however, they were not always easily distinguishable from the calls for national and cultural unity from the platform of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Muslims and foreign-cloth boycott: Congress dominance and communal riots

The objections to civil disobedience raised by Muslim leaders do not fully explain the dearth of Muslim involvement in protests at district and town levels. A closer analysis of one of the popular movements of the early 1930s – the cloth hartals – offers an example of how communal ideology encouraged by nationalist imagery formed an interface with social and commercial competition. Cloth itself was significant as a product of exchange and tribute in pre-colonial India, imbued with symbolic ritual significance and transmitting holiness, purity and pollution. In this respect, north India was relatively unique in how cloth and clothing had continued to retain a religious and ritual resonance even after full commercialisation. Cloth transactions occurred during worship, and purity and holiness could be transferred through cloth offerings. Of greatest significance is that the ritual significance of cloth was by no means a preoccupation of Hindu worship: the gift of dress was an essential act of homage under Mughal kingship. For Muslims, the impurity of particular forms of dress was to be avoided as a source of distraction during worship. Neither was political protest against the cultural, religious and economic implications of British imported cloth a 'Hindu' history. As early as 1857 the idea that indigenous production was affected by foreign imports was as relevant to Muslim weavers in the Ganges valley as it was for others.[37]

However, it was between 1905 and 1910, under the influence of idealist, self-help philosophies, that the sense of an endangered rural craft was transformed more concretely into a set of symbols for the moral and

[36] PAI 15 March 1930.

[37] For a detailed account of the political and ritual significance of cloth, see C. A. Bayly, 'The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700–1930', in *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Community in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi, 1998), pp. 172–205.

spiritual regeneration of India. During the protests against the partition of Bengal, yellow and vermillion cloth bangles were used, for example, to represent national brotherhood. Leaders such as Aurobindo talked of the idea of a religious sacrifice in the abandoning of foreign goods.[38] By this point Muslim participation was less apparent. The method of a 'swadeshi' ('home industry') vow in temples was established and the boycott of foreign cloth was strongly associated with Hindu revivalism. Participation in swadeshi was enforced through traditional caste sanctions, and overlapped with discussions about community in journals such as *Bande Mataram* and *Sandhya*.[39] Gandhi reinvigorated the symbolism of cloth even further. The notion of the protection of the home economy was re-emphasised as a moral and religious duty. Religious and magical aspects of clothing were brought out in the notion that the wearing of European luxury goods could be regarded as 'sinful'. Most importantly, for Gandhians, spinning became an act of prayer which allowed the individual to be purged of sin.[40] Once again, this was a set of symbols more easily associated with non-Muslim worship. In the 1930s religious associations with khadi even went to the extent of Hindu images being clad in home-spun. In the Appagangadhar temple, the image of Shiva had been so clothed in April 1930.[41] As the last chapter illustrated, there were also clear connections with movements for cow protection.

By the 1930s, then, it would not be surprising to find several symbolic as well as practical reasons for Muslim estrangement from cloth boycott. The practical dimensions are most apparent. Firstly, aggressive methods were often used to operate the early civil disobedience foreign-cloth boycotts. Traders and sellers of foreign cloth were rigorously picketed – an activity which outwardly demonstrated 'sacrifice' for the nation. Once it had become clear that large numbers of Muslim traders would stubbornly refuse to comply with the pickets, a sense of victimisation resulted: Congress volunteers were compelled to concentrate on Muslim businesses, as they often stood alone in opposition to the boycotts. Secondly, this idea of victimisation was combined with a fear in some towns that Hindu traders were in league with Congress and prepared to enter into 'pacts' which would benefit their side of the trade. Thirdly, foreign-cloth boycott thereby led to a communal polarisation in the cloth trade, which also set up a sense of commercial competition along communal lines in places like Kanpur, Agra and Banaras. Finally, this conflict of interest on communal lines, alongside the activities of the pickets themselves, helped to precipitate a series of Hindu–Muslim clashes, climaxing in the furious

[38] *Ibid.* p. 199. [39] Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 114–17.
[40] Bayly, 'The Origins of Swadeshi', pp. 200–3. [41] *Leader* (Allahabad), 20 April 1930.

riot in Kanpur in March 1931. Despite the connection of the hartal with these riots, the communal element of the boycotts was not foreseen. In some districts and cities of UP, for example Lucknow, Muslims took an active part in the boycotts.[42] In some contexts, objections to cloth boycott became communal only insofar as they led to competition for resources, which subsequently developed along community lines. The same occurred in non-protest political activities, for example in the conduct of municipal politics.[43] Nevertheless, the overlap of Congress activity with Hindu–Muslim conflict led to a deepened distrust of Congress and civil disobedience.

The movement for the boycott of foreign cloth was intensified by the UP Congress in the first week of April 1930. It was primarily symbolic and coercive. The wearing of khadi or the denunciation of foreign cloth was employed as a badge, or a sign of support for civil disobedience. There was a tension in the political languages linked into boycott between the economic arguments for the protection of small-scale production and the purely spiritual, ritual and cultural arguments about foreign cloth as a pollutant. A recurrent theme in the much treated subject of khadi in political speeches was not the details of how Britain had been economically exploiting the subcontinent, or how the wearing of home-spun could practically undermine that exploitation. These ideas were taken for granted. Rather, the stress was on the symbolic significance of indigenous produce and the contrasting 'alienness' of foreign cloth, manufactured using 'animal fat'. Not to take part in this movement represented a denunciation of the Congress and in some respects a rejection of the spiritual significance of the nation. This was demonstrated in a meeting of over 1,000 in Daraganj, Allahabad, calling for the boycott of foreign cloth, at which Purushottam Das Tandon asked the audience to take a vow on the sacred river Ganges that they would never wear foreign cloth again.[44] The dominance of the ritual and spiritual significance of cloth over other anti-colonial symbols in the language of boycott was illustrated by the repeated stress on obligation and coercion. From the very beginning the cloth hartals and boycotts were designed to draw Indians into support for the Congress and to discourage resistance to civil disobedience. They aimed to test the patriotic sentiment of customers and sellers, and to challenge commercialisation as a European phenomenon. Resistance could lead to social exclusion.

Within a week of the inception of the foreign-cloth boycotts, resisters were placed under intense pressure. In a number of UP cities picketing

42 Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, pp. 87–8.
43 *The Citizen Weekly* (Kanpur), 4 and 10 October 1941.
44 *Leader* (Allahabad), 15 May 1930.

occasionally verged on violent conflict. Once it had become evident that in the majority of urban centres Muslims were not taking full part in the boycott, instructions were publicised to target Muslim shops. In Etawah, in April 1930, declarations were made that if Muslims did not join the hartals in one week picketing was to be concentrated on them. In Lucknow, on 27 December 1930, a Muslim dealer in foreign cloth, Haji Abdul Razaq, was threatened with the destruction of his shop if he refused to seal his cloth. He was subjected to continuous picketing.[45] At Banda, in the middle of May, pickets at one Muslim shop threatened to burn the owner's goods if he did not subscribe to the boycott. An increasingly aggressive approach to the Muslim resistance led to a sense of victimisation. By July, Muslim meetings attempted to persuade audiences to deal only with Muslim shops.[46] Hindu shopkeepers also felt victimised by the boycott, but instances of Hindu resistance were rarer. Indeed, where joint Hindu protests did occur, they often detailed the unfair advantage being derived by Muslims continuing to hold out against the boycott. In Agra, for example, Hindu merchants expressed annoyance in 1930 and 1931 at the stoppage of sales of foreign cloth, as Muslim shopkeepers continued to prosper.[47]

The stubborn refusal of a significant proportion of Muslim shopkeepers to abide by the boycott fed into a Congress-led condemnation of Muslim traders. This came from Congress Muslims decrying the apathy of their community as well as Hindu Congressmen. In Allahabad, on 3 June, Muzaffar Husain upbraided the Muslim community in general for opposing the boycott. At Rae Bareli, in the same week, Ram Chandra complained of the general inactivity of Muslims during civil disobedience. Frustration could lead to communal pronouncements. At Bewar, on 26 May, one Piare Lal announced at a Congress gathering that if Muslims would not join civil disobedience, they would be turned out on attainment of swaraj. In Kanpur, on 16 July 1930, at a meeting attended by over a thousand, Prem Narayan appealed to the audience to look upon the struggle surrounding the cloth boycott as a 'holy war'.[48] In the same city, in February 1931, Narayan Prasad Arora, an important Congress leader, echoed a common sentiment by declaring that Hindus should refuse to remain in slavery like their Muslim brethren by selling foreign cloth.[49] Kanpur was a crucial location for the cloth trade in UP and leaders

45 Note on Congress picketing from Kunwar Jagdish Prasad to Secretary to the Government of India, 2 March 1931, Home Poll. file 14/21 (1307) 1931 NAI.
46 *Himmat*, 5–12 July 1930, UPNNR L/R/5/99 IOR.
47 Note on the Agra riots, 15–18 March 1931, GAD Box 70/71 file 1263/1931 UPSA.
48 PAI 7 June; 26 July 1930; 28 February 1931.
49 *Ibid.*, 28 February 1931; *Leader* (Allahabad), 14 February 1931.

such as Arora had been important in promoting Congress volunteer movements in association with the Hindu akharas (gymnasiums).

The increasingly structured resistance to the cloth hartals contributed to a more compact self-definition of the UP Muslim community once the urban boycotts really began to take effect from the summer of 1930. The experience of the cloth boycotts helped to define specific cities where a particularly strong Muslim resistance was notable. One such city was Allahabad where, in May 1930, Vilayat Husain and Abdul Majid urged an independent line for Muslims.[50] Other important emerging centres of Muslim resistance were Agra, Aligarh, Kanpur and Deoband.[51] In Agra, Muslims held out against the boycott throughout 1930 and into 1931 and were themselves involved in violent methods to maintain that resistance. In July 1930, a group of Muslim shopkeepers seized a Muslim boy and burned his khadi in public. By October 1930, Kheri, Kumaun, Bijnor, Mainpuri, Bulandshahr and Moradabad districts had also become areas of outright Muslim resistance to cloth boycotts.[52] Significantly, Moradabad had been one city where Congress youth organisations had been strong in pushing for foreign boycotts in the late 1920s.[53]

In some districts, Muslim organisations emerged to actively boycott the Hindu community and civil disobedience itself. By the end of 1930 and during the first two months of 1931, this included the activities of a specific organisation, the Tanzeem movement. Tanzeem, although an organisation for Muslim religious self-expression, also attempted to offer direct counter-boycotts to those organised by the Congress. Muslim centres of opposition to boycott overlapped with the first foci of Tanzeem: Agra, Kanpur, Deoband and Allahabad. The quasi-religious aspect of Tanzeem's political posturing was set up against the Congress as a specifically Hindu organisation: during Diwali in Kanpur, Banda and Faizabad, Tanzeem volunteers attempted to prevent Muslims from participating in the festivities. In addition, the organisational structures set up by Tanzeem committees and the activities undertaken strongly resembled those of Congress volunteer movements, echoing the latter's 'prabhat pheries', or morning processions. The movement had received some important official encouragement.[54] Nevertheless, Tanzeem soon built up its own momentum. Nizur Ahmed in Agra, and Vilayat Husain

50 *Leader* (Allahabad), 27 May 1930.

51 Note on Congress picketing from Kunwar Jagdish Prasad to Secretary to the Government of India, 2 March 1931, Home Poll. file 14/21 (1307) 1931 NAI.

52 PAI 24 May; 25 October 1930.

53 Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 66.

54 Hailey to Crerar, 25 September 1930 Hailey Papers MSS.EUR.F.220/19B IOR: 'if we are to keep our Muslims from joining Congress we must take certain risks. We have, therefore, given a certain measure of moral support to the tanzim movement and have suggested to several Muslims of position that they should help it financially; we have

in Allahabad promoted the movement, so that in the first week in August Tanzeem was preached daily in each city.[55] By the middle of September 1930, Tanzeem had spread to Aligarh, Budaun, Farrukhabad, Azamgarh, Unao, Kheri, Faizabad and Bahraich districts. In Kheri, a newly established Working Committee of the Tanzeem-ul-Islam opened its own cloth shop. By 1931 the movement had really taken off, with an All-India Tanzeem Conference in Allahabad in the first week of January 1931.[56] By February, the serious implications of this communal opposition to cloth boycott became clear. Tanzeem volunteers were involved in the large Hindu–Muslim riot in Banaras in February 1931, which had come about as a reaction to the cloth boycotts.[57] A large number of the Muslim funeral processionists who started the clash were seen to be wearing the distinctive badge of the organisation.[58]

There were also regionally specific reasons for the build up of Muslim resistance to foreign-cloth boycott. In Allahabad, Kanpur, Mainpuri, Banaras and Agra, Muslim shopkeepers feared a 'Hindu conspiracy' against their share of the trade. Certainly, Hindu shopkeepers more readily entered into agreements with local Congress committees, allowing them in some cases to sell off their presently held foreign cloth on the understanding that thereafter only khadi would be marketed.[59] In Bijnor district Hindu shopkeepers signed pledges agreeing to sell off their present foreign stock by 15 June, despite the fact that picketing had started two months previously. A similar and more controversial agreement was brokered by Madan Mohan Malaviya for Hindu cloth merchants in Banaras. Shortly after this agreement, a meeting of Hindu 'middlemen' in the city decided not to purchase cloth from Muslim weavers unless they wore khadi. In Mainpuri, an agreement was reached between all of the Hindu shopkeepers of the city to set up a system of fines for anyone selling foreign cloth, thereby attempting to take the agitation into their own hands. In Sultanpur, in September, another pact was agreed between the City Congress Committee and Hindu cloth merchants, allowing merchants to sell existing foreign stocks, so long as they did not order more.[60] Those with access to the ear of the Congress could therefore derive benefit from

even gone so far as to pay from Secret Service Funds the travelling expenses of some of its preachers.'

55 PAI 2, 16 August; 1, 15 November 1930.
56 *Ibid.*, 27 September, 4 October 1930; 10 January 1931.
57 Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*, pp. 230–9.
58 'Riot in Kanpur and Banaras', 7 May 1931, GAD Box 70/71 file 1263/1931 UPSA.
59 This explains the ability of the Tanzeem organisation to find a niche as institutional patron for a number of Muslim cloth sellers in the main cities of UP.
60 PAI 31 May; 21 June; 28 June; 27 September 1930.

symbolic association with the cloth boycotts, whilst minimising the effects on trade and sales.

Commercial interests therefore could easily become entwined with Hindu–Muslim competition as a result of these manoeuvres. In one important case, the enthusiasm of a City Congress Committee for the boycott restricted the chances of agreement between Hindu and Muslim cloth sellers. In Allahabad a meeting of Muslim cloth merchants was held at the house of Maulana Vilayat Husain on 26 April. It was decided that since Muslims had so far held aloof from civil disobedience, they would suffer disproportionately from the foreign-cloth boycott.[61] In response, a meeting of Hindu cloth merchants decided that if Muslim shops on the basis of this were afforded protection from picketers, the burden would fall on Hindu merchants. It was therefore the desire of the Hindu merchants that organisers of the boycott should postpone their activities until after Bakr-Id, since the chief objection of Muslims was that they had large stocks of foreign cloth for that festival.

Here was a chance for an important Congress Committee to build on a Hindu–Muslim agreement between traders, and assuage Muslim fears about Hindu–Congress selling arrangements. It was not to be. The meeting of the Muslim cloth merchants, represented by Mohammed Husain and Zaheer Ahmad, sent a letter to Purushottam Das Tandon and the Allahabad City Congress Committee. Ahmad began by remarking that Muslims were not given a chance to decide whether or not to join civil disobedience, since the Congress did not want to settle the communal question first. The letter then made three main points: most Muslim merchants only had small capital reserves and therefore a foreign-cloth boycott would be more likely to ruin them. Most of the Muslim trade in foreign cloth was during the two Bakr-Id festivals, and the second one was now approaching: the boycott could simply be postponed until after the festival. Thirdly, there was an apprehension that the picketing might lead to Hindu–Muslim conflict. Tandon's reply to the letter rejected the proposals. He wrote that there was no reason for Muslims to feel that swadeshi was a communal question. Secondly, Hindus also had their season of fairs, just as Muslims had Bakr-Id.[62] Whilst in Sultanpur, Banaras, Bijnor and Mainpuri, Congress Committees had entered into agreements with Hindu cloth traders, allowing them to sell existing stocks, no such agreement could be reached with Muslim merchants during Bakr-Id, despite the goodwill of Allahabad's

[61] Maulana Vilayat Husain was a supporter of government during the Kanpur mosque affair of 1913, and the First World War, despite a brief phase of support for Congress during non-cooperation. Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, appendix III, pp. 421–2.

[62] *Leader* (Allahabad), 28, 30 April; 1 May 1930.

Hindu traders. Better Hindu trader access to the ear of Congress in effect helped to make swadeshi 'a communal question' in Allahabad, despite the best intentions of Tandon. Hindu merchants were more likely to submit to the pickets than Muslims, if as in other cities there was a chance of some form of agreement with the local Congress. When it became clear that Muslims continued to trade foreign cloth, Hindu merchants in Moradabad and Agra became restive. As a result, Congress volunteers were compelled to put more pressure on Muslim shops in those cities. The spiralling connection between the cloth trade and the religious community deepened.[63]

By the close of 1930 Hindu–Muslim rioting in some of the major cities of UP was anticipated, especially in Allahabad.[64] By July 1930 increasing Congress bombast in some cities meant that even the discussion of boycott was sensitive. In Kanpur, on 13 July, G. G. Jog addressed a public meeting of 2,000 to tackle a quarrel between Congress volunteers and a Muslim shopkeeper. The discussion nearly led to a communal riot, and was compounded by Jog's stress on the spirit of 'sacrifice' pervading the Hindu population of Kanpur. In Bareilly, five days later, a Hindu–Muslim fracas developed from an incident in which a Muslim beat a Congress Hindu picketer. In Agra, on 28 July, just ten days later, Muslims attempting to purchase goods from a picketed shop clashed with Hindus. A similar conflict occurred in Banaras at the end of December 1930.[65] By the end of 1930, and early in 1931, the situation had become particularly tense in Agra and Banaras. In December 1930, in Banaras, there was a brief scuffle between a Muslim customer and a picketer, which created a larger conflagration, and in Agra the persistent picketing of Muslim shops had created a tense atmosphere by mid-January 1931.[66]

In the middle of February 1931 the storm broke. In Banaras a serious Hindu–Muslim riot occurred during the funeral procession of a Peshawari cloth merchant. The merchant, Agha Muhammad Jan, had been reportedly picketed by Congress Hindus. After assaulting some of the picketers, the merchant was shot dead. The funeral procession that followed was accompanied by 5,000 Muslims, many armed with lathis. The processionists took offence at Hindu shops being open on the route of the procession and a riot ensued.[67] At Bareilly, Maulana

[63] PAI 7 June 1930.

[64] *Leader* (Allahabad), 24 April 1930. There had been an anticipation of trouble in Allahabad in connection with the festival of Bakr-Id in April.

[65] Note on Congress picketing, Home Poll. file 14/21 (1307) 1931 NAI.

[66] PAI 19 July; 26 July; 9 August; 13 December 1930; 24 January 1931.

[67] Note on the Banaras riots, 7 May 1931, GAD Box 70/71 file 1263/1931 UPSA.

Hamid Raza Khan advised those present at Bakr-Id prayers to take a lesson from Banaras: Muslims should not be slaves of the Congress or of the government. A similar speech was made in the first week of March at Kiratpur in Bijnor. In Sultanpur, in the same week as the Banaras riot, Congress volunteers attacked a Muslim who had purchased foreign cloth, provoking Muslim retaliation. As a result, the Pesh Imam of the Sultanpur Jami Masjid, who had been compromised in a temple–mosque quarrel, was boycotted by Muslims.[68] On 24 March a serious Hindu–Muslim riot broke out in Kanpur. Once again, there was evidence that the immediate causes of the riot related to the furious picketing of Muslim cloth shops and the over-excitement of Banar Sena volunteers.[69] The seriousness of Kanpur was such that for many it continued to resonate in political comment and discussion across UP and India, in some cases leading to further sectarian tension.[70]

This transplantion of the conflict to other urban spheres was assisted by the nature of the reporting and the description of the riot. The most important channels were the Hindi press: papers such as *Sainik* and *Aj* and journals like *Abhyudaya*. These papers had been instrumental in publicising the religious idioms of the UP Congress since the beginning of civil disobedience. Naturally the symbolism of ritually polluting cloth and the sense of communal exclusion could, through the agency of these journals, be picked up in other towns. The symbols surrounding cloth boycott were able to widen the Kanpur riot to a provincial sphere. They were also to make Kanpur significant at a national level. Suggestions that the actions of Congress volunteers had contributed to the riot led to a detailed Congress investigation and a fresh look at the party's relationship to communal conflict.[71] In April 1931 there was widespread panic across UP. In Allahabad Muslim shops closed. In Sultanpur large groups of Muslims were recruited into Tanzeem in revenge for Kanpur. In Bara Banki the Bhagat Singh hartal was attended only by Hindus. In Etawah, Kanpur had provoked a fear that there would be trouble at the Ramnaumi festival. The feeling of increased communal tension was also experienced in Bulandshahr, Meerut (where there was another riot), Moradabad, Fatehpur, Mathura, Hamirpur, Farrukabad, Jhansi,

68 PAI 21 February; 28 February; 28 March; 4 April 1931.

69 Written Statement of J. F. Sale, District Magistrate, Kanpur, 16 April 1931 'Kanpur Enquiry Report', pp. 1–2, L/PJ/7/75 IOR .

70 The riot had also unearthed some interesting features about the Kanpur criminal underworld, in which Hindu and Muslim gangs supposedly ran protection rackets – a situation which provoked the passing of the 1931 Goonda Act. Memoirs of Mudie MSS.EUR.F.180/79.

71 This led to the production of the Congress Committee Report into the Kanpur riot, reroduced in Barrier, *The Roots of Communal Politics*, pp. 51–260.

Bareilly, Azamgarh, Banda, Budaun, Etah, Banaras, Gonda, Mainpuri, Pilibhit and Rae Bareli.[72]

The foreign-cloth boycott contributed to assumptions that the political interests of the main religious communities were polarised in UP. This was demonstrated in the dramatic conclusion of the first year of civil disobedience, with severe rioting in four cities and several 'Hindu–Muslim' clashes in other districts across the province. It might be argued that these communal riots were actually the end-game of a decade of strife originating in the early 1920s. In this interpretation, the UP Congress was simply taking an enormous risk in restarting mass protests in the midst of a period of religious tension, and the riots of 1931 should not necessarily be linked to the style or content of Congress activities.[73] However, this interpretation assumes that, by 1930, Muslims were almost inevitably estranged from the Congress. This was not the case. The Muslim League at Lucknow and the Shia Conference both supported the principle of foreign-cloth boycott. In other parts of India such as Bombay and the North-West Frontier Province and even in some UP districts, Muslims were part of the front line of Congress action in early stages of civil disobedience.[74] More importantly, the communal riots across UP in the 1920s do not explain why Muslims began to boycott the Congress, rather than just organisations with obvious Hindu communal agendas.

Chaudhuri Khaliquzzaman described the Kanpur riot of March 1931 as the first 'political' riot.[75] It was the political circumstances surrounding Kanpur that were decisive for Hindu–Muslim relations in UP, rather than the events of the riot itself. In the same way, the fact that the cloth boycotts created physical conflicts is less important than the combinations of political languages running through the boycotts. The foreign-cloth hartals, rarely anti-Muslim when begun, appeared communal as a result of the symbolism with which they were infused. Some of the leading Muslims in Allahabad – Vilayat Husain and Zaheer Ahmad, for example – had a history of loyalty to the government. But their characterisation of the

[72] PAI 4 April; 11 April 1931.

[73] Most historians of this period, by grouping the 1920s with the early 1930s, have to an extent given this impression. The stress has been on the disease-like characteristics of communal conflict, which represented a 'problem' which an imperfect Congress Party was unable to overcome: Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*. Or the focus has been on the idea of a Muslim separatist politics, irreconcilable with mainstream political activity: David Page, *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, 1920–1932* (Delhi, 1982). In most studies of the period, 'communalism' is taken as the problem of focus rather than the nature of political activity which might create communal conflict.

[74] Jim Masselos, 'Audiences, Actors and Congress Dramas', pp. 71–83.

[75] Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 72.

Congress as 'Hindu' still struck a chord. The Muslim view of Congress as domineering was then reinforced by the coercive methods of the cloth boycott and its attempt socially and religiously to degrade dealers in foreign cloth. The repeated call of the Mahasabha for joint electorates and rule of the majority seemed to be vindicated in this coercive movement of boycott. The more the hartals were associated with the 'majority' and were derived from notions of ritual pollution, the more they corresponded to the forms of rhetoric which asserted the catholicity of 'Hindu' traditions, proscribed in certain instances by the Congress. By January 1931, even hartals for the deaths of leaders, acknowledged by Hindus and Muslims alike, led to communal differences.[76] In a general sense, the symbolism and action surrounding the cloth boycotts served to make Congress appear to be the champion of Hindu interests. The target of Muslim complaints therefore shifted from the Hindu communal bodies of the 1920s to the Congress. The question of how this occurred would require the historian to move beyond the more obvious demonstrations of civil disobedience. A more detailed look at Congress attitudes towards Hinduism and the Hindu community in a less well-known context, through untouchable uplift and Gandhi's 'harijan' fasts, will therefore be the next point of enquiry.

The Congress and untouchable uplift

The publication of the Communal Award in the summer of 1932, setting out the parameters of special representation for minorities in India, has been described as a crucial event in the history of Muslim separatism.[77] The Award gave the Muslims of Punjab and Bengal the chance of domination in their own provinces and extended the possibilities of imperial control. In the UP it was not so much the Award itself that generated renewed enthusiasm for a separate Muslim political voice, as Muslim reactions to Congress views about separate representation. Attitudes towards special representation and the political interests of minorities reinforced the sense of Muslim alienation from the Congress for reasons which have been relatively neglected by historians. Most analyses of the impact of the Award in UP point out the ambivalence of Congress towards communal representation. The official Congress resolved in August 1932 to neither accept nor reject the Award. In protest against this decision, a relatively small group under the leadership of Madan Mohan Malaviya broke away

[76] In Kanpur, Congress workers approached Muslims for a joint meeting on the death of Mohammed Ali. No agreement was reached and separate Hindu and Muslim meetings were eventually organized. *Vartman* (Allahabad), 15 January 1931.

[77] Page, *Prelude to Partition*, p. 257.

from the main body of the Congress to form the Congress Nationalist Party. This has been described as lacking a popular following, especially by comparison with the burgeoning, albeit disparate, Congress Socialist Party by the mid-1930s.[78] For this reason, the Communal Award and Congress reactions to it are not considered to have had a decisive significance for Congress relations with Muslims in UP.

The sentiments expressed by Malaviya against the principle of separate representation for 'special classes' of Indians did, however, strike a chord with a large body of Congressmen.[79] For many, rejection of the principle of divide and rule, a belief in the composite and organic unity of the Indian polity, had nothing to do with 'Hindu' power. But in the nature of Congressmen's reaction to the section of the Award dealing with the 'depressed classes', and its implications for the 'Hindu community', the gap was narrowed between Malaviya's position and that of Gandhians and mainstream Congress agents. The significance of possible untouchable electoral isolation, and Gandhi's fasts against separate electorates, generated a UP Congress response that was influenced by four interlinked political languages. The first was a reaction to the particular context of the Communal Award, coming in the midst of civil disobedience and the symbolic politics surrounding that movement. Secondly, reaction to these separate electorates also engaged with notions of Hindu communal integrity dating back to the 1910s and 1920s. Whilst decrying the plight of untouchables, Congressmen in UP exhibited concern for the integrity of Hinduism which brought back images of shuddhi and the muscular proselytising of the Arya Samaj. The third political language was closely related to the second, in that it was concerned with the reforming relationship between a broad 'Hindu' community and 'backward classes'. This, however, was a notion of the Hindu community as cosmopolitan and essentially modern, containing within itself the momentum for reform. In 1932 and 1933 the Congress went beyond the Samaj by directly uniting this drive for social reform in the Hindu community with ideas about nationhood and national integrity. The fourth and final set of political languages related to colonial projects in communal enumeration and representation. The response of UP Congress agents to Gandhi's fasts was based on the ability to represent the movement as reformist

[78] Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, pp. 150–1, 203–4; Page, *Prelude to Partition*, pp. 257–60.

[79] This was not measured by numerical support for Malaviya's Independent Party, which was indeed relatively small. Rather, the sentiments expressed by the Independents about separate representation were shared by a much broader group of Congressmen in UP than party figures would suggest. Evidence for this is seen in the response to untouchable uplift and comments by Congress leaders in the later 1930s. See chapters 5 and 6.

and rational as well as religious. Therefore the interaction between these four languages is critical. Moreover, their combination is central to our understanding of Muslim reactions to Gandhi's 'harijan' fast: why did many UP Muslims associate this movement to allow untouchables to use temples and wells to the broader Congress sponsorship of social reform? How did it come to be associated with explicitly Muslim concerns relating to marriage reform? Finally, these reactions added another dimension to the Muslim divorce from civil disobedience and the UP Congress organisation of the mid-1930s.

In order to understand the first political language, concerned with the direct reaction to the Communal Award, it is necessary to investigate how far the Congress was willing to conceive of untouchables as a distinct 'minority'. Congress attitudes towards depressed classes and towards Muslims as 'minority communities' were quite distinct. The 'Hindu unity' problem seemed to be privileged by comparison to the general 'minority' question.[80] Throughout civil disobedience the Congress had opposed separate representation for Muslims by highlighting the essentially unifying elements of Indian life.[81] However, there had never been a concerted project to overcome Muslim separatism. Like the problem of communal conflict itself, Congress more often avoided the question, rather than develop a political strategy towards Muslims.[82] In contrast, under the leadership of Gandhi, Congress's objections to separate electorates for the 'depressed classes' were intensely pursued in September 1932. There were many within the Congress who simply saw support for this movement as a method of overcoming the unjustified disadvantages of caste. Yet the responses to Gandhi's fasts picked up most clearly on the rhetoric of Hindu unity: that of 'allowing' or 'admitting' a largely passive group of depressed classes into the fold. In this respect, and although high-caste agency fitted squarely with notions of 'satyagraha', the movement resembled movements of conversion more than simple

[80] A study of the relationship between the self-perception of Muslim groups and 'depressed classes' as 'minorities' would be an interesting area of research. The Shia Political Conference in UP certainly articulated its sense of political identity with reference to 'depressed' Hindu castes, claiming that the Muslim League attitude towards the Shias corresponded to Congress attitudes towards untouchables. 'The Shia Political Conference,' L/PJ/8/693 Coll.117/E7 IOR.

[81] This was given its most interesting manifestation in incidents where the UP Congress was forced to respond to evidence of Hindu–Muslim enmity. The most obvious example of this can be found in its response to the Kanpur riot of March 1931. The Congress Enquiry Committee produced a report which gave details of a cultural syncretism between Hindus and Muslims. Barrier, *The Roots of Communal Politics*, pp. 51–159.

[82] Pandey notes that between 14 June 1931 and December 1934 there was not a single reference to Hindu–Muslim questions in general meetings of UP Congressmen. Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 150.

campaigns for social reform, and as such brought Congress more closely into contact with the Arya Samaj. Here, responses to the Communal Award naturally engaged with our second political language – that of Hindu 'sangathan' and consolidation based around the 1920s' shuddhi movement.

Congress and Arya Samaj support for the reform of Hindu society was for the most part based on common political objectives. Politicians associated with the Hindu Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj used explicitly communal language, which Congress could rarely be associated with publicly. However, for all three parties in UP in the early 1930s the uplift of untouchables was a necessity for reasons of national integrity – a way of making the 'Hindu community' strong so as to make the nation strong. For the Hindu Mahasabha, Hindu strength, numerically and politically, was defined against that of Muslims. For the Congress, untouchable uplift would prevent the creation of another divisive constituency. Muslims were not necessarily viewed as belligerents, but were expected eventually to mould themselves to the Congress ideals.[83] Yet, despite the obviously more aggressive ideas of the Mahasabha, it was Congress's formulations of Hindu unity, our third political language which talked of the Hindu community as essentially cosmopolitan, that created non-Hindu opposition to untouchable uplift.

Resentment of the Congress in UP was related to power, particularly for those groups jealous of their own social and political integrity. Consequently, from the beginning of civil disobedience, Congress also came up against Muslim resistance as a result of its policies for social reform. There had been widespread Muslim resistance to the Sarda Act limiting child marriage, a piece of legislation which had succeeded partly due to Congress support. This act of 1929 raised the legal act of marriage from twelve to fourteen years, and in many respects helped to highlight fissures within Hindu and Muslim communities. Response to it was most vehement in Sialkot, Ludhiana, Gurgaon and Lyallpur, and most significantly it was opposed by institutions which had traditionally backed the Congress – for example the Jamiat-ul-Ulema I Hind.[84] Muhammad Ali was particularly vociferous in his opposition to Sarda, insisting that Muslims be excluded from the operation of the Act and threatening open

[83] Other historians have described the attempts of Congress to assimilate other political parties as a failure to accommodate minority differences rather than as an indication that Hindu nationalism played a role in Congress ideology: 'The fundamental problem was that the all-inclusive, nationalist appeal of the Congress did not allow for any variation between the highly differentiated interests of the sections of the population.' Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 152.

[84] Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam Since 1850* (London, 2000), pp. 311–12.

revolt against a piece of legislation which, he claimed, militated against the freedom of choice inherent in the shari'ah.[85]

More generally, the concentration on untouchable uplift in 1932 was viewed as political bullying, and a cover for an underlying attempt to develop Hindu communal strength. Imperial observers certainly interpreted the movement in this way. Here, the fourth political language – that of the colonial state in its assumption about community and political power – came to affect the overall meaning of uplift. One official letter claimed that 'The Muslims regarded this development as a subtle manoeuvre to strengthen the hands of the Hindu Mahasabha vis-à-vis the new Constitution.'[86] In the atmosphere of the recently publicised Communal Award, in which the Congress Nationalists and Hindu Mahasabha bewailed the injustice done to Hindus in its provisions, this Muslim view about untouchable uplift seemed particularly pertinent to the British. There was also a sense of identification between the Muslims and depressed classes on the basis of UP political arithmetic. The colonial state had, as in other contexts, attempted to guarantee the political position and aspirations of minority communities. This of course had its cynical dimension, and contained strategies adopted by others: for example, the French in Syria and their policies towards the Alawite community there. By attempting to wipe out disadvantage, the uplift campaign also sought to wipe out difference and the ethnic claims of separate identity on which a range of minority claims rested.

Although the issue of untouchable uplift had always been a Congress concern, it was not until the prompting of Gandhi's fast in September 1932 that the campaign appeared as a popular movement throughout UP. In October the Harijan Sevak Sangh was established, a Gandhian organisation working for the educational advancement and employment of untouchables. By the following year, Gandhi's all-India harijan tour, ending in Banaras in July 1934, collected Rs.60,337 from UP.[87] From the very beginning Gandhi's pronouncements on uplift reflected the complicated and ambiguous interplay between the four overlapping political languages. It is significant that, despite the highly charged political context of Gandhi's campaign, he chose to represent the struggle for untouchables as a purely religious matter. Here was a reflection of the position of the Arya Samaj, which also denied that its activities were political.[88]

85 M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (London, 1967), p. 539.

86 Express letter from the Secretary to the Government of Bombay, Home Department, to Home, Simla, 11 August 1933, L/PJ/7/533 IOR.

87 Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 69.

88 Acharya Ram Dev, a member of the Arya Samaj and chief assistant of Munsho Ram at the Kangri Gurukul, had written a book, *Arya Samaj and its Detractors, a Vindication*, in

On 11 March 1932 Gandhi had written to Samuel Hoare, then Secretary of State for India, reminding him of a pledge he, Gandhi, had made at the Round Table Conference to fast until death in the event that separate electorates were implemented for 'depressed classes'. His self-proclaimed motivation for fasting, although prompted by a political issue, really related to the religious consequences which he feared would result from separate electorates. Hence, he saw himself entering into a spiritual act which would help to maintain the religious integrity of Hinduism.

Yet Gandhi also engaged with the broader Congress notion of Hinduism as an all-inclusive religious force. This was central to the global publicity of his fasts.[89] Gandhi was keen to stress to the western world that his politics were part of his religion. In a cable to William Shirer on 23 September 1932 he stated: 'Americans should know that my politics are derived from my religion.' Then, in a statement to the press on the same day, he claimed: 'My message to British and American people is that they must not mistake this for a political move. It is a deep spiritual effort.'[90] On the other hand, Gandhi could not escape from the political logic and context of the Communal Award. In actual fact, whether caused by misunderstanding of his motives or not, his act quickly acquired a political meaning. Indeed, the harijan movement also brought rich dividends for the Congress in later elections.[91] The Hinduism discussed during Gandhi's fast formed a premise for political opposition to British imperial blundering and, through the widespread response to the fast, was wedded once more to attempts to identify Hindu strength with Indian national strength.

Gandhi was provoked into his fast by a constitutional proposal, yet he chose to base his protest on a claim of 'religion in danger' which stressed that the fast was essentially spiritual. As in the use of religious spaces and festivals to escape the logic of the colonial state seen in the last chapter, Gandhi used this idea of the indivisibility of the political and religious to draw attention away from issues of pure political representation and seat-counting. The languages of colonial enumeration were in tension, then, with a political language that strove to define the catholicity of the Hindu community. Yet against the background of

order to deny the idea of the Samaj's political agenda. Gulshan Swarup Saxena, *Arya Samaj Movement in India* (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 79–81. In both cases – the work of the Samaj and Gandhi's fast and tour – the attempt to represent the work with untouchables as non-political enhanced Muslim suspicions.

89 Gandhi received a cable from Safia Zaghlul Pasha, the widow of Zaghlul the Egyptian nationalist, on 23 September. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. LI, p. 133.

90 *Ibid.*, pp. 128–9.

91 Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 70.

Muslim non-involvement in civil disobedience, the religious rhetoric used by Congressmen in speeches and writings, the associations with the Arya Samaj, and the communal riots of 1931, it is difficult to see how Gandhi could believe that such a 'religious' act would be detached from politics entirely. Indeed, from the correspondence with Hoare, it appeared that Gandhi's move was also part of a nationalist assertion that depicted Hindu life as something pure, and distinguished from the 'west'. Gandhi quickly asserted the primacy of religion over politics as a motive for his fast:

> So far as Hinduism is concerned separate electorate would simply vivisect and disrupt it. For me, the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious. The political aspect, important though it is, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue.[92]

Gandhi's declarations of intent were mixed with a strong dose of criticism of British political life, as though the fast could be represented as something pure by comparison to the morally corrupt west. His fast was supposedly not about the politics of separate representation, yet the constitutional and ideological premises of the Communal Award were obviously in his mind as he wrote to Hoare:

> my recent visit to England has confirmed my opinion that your democracy is a superficial circumscribed thing. In the weightiest matters decisions are taken by individuals or groups without reference to Parliament.[93]

Gandhi was clearly representing the campaign against representation for depressed classes as part of a nationalist crusade from the very beginning, suggesting that the harijan movement was more than a 'constructive' programme. This was demonstrated in his cable to William Shirer on 23 September 1932, in which he declared that 'Nationalism will be the stronger for sacrificial death.'[94]

Even more interestingly, whilst Gandhi usually set out a very catholic notion of Hinduism, at other times he also represented it as a vulnerable religious community. Here there was a tension and interplay between a typical Congress exposition of an all-embracing Hinduism and an Arya Samaj-style vision of community under threat. The depiction

[92] M. K. Gandhi to Samuel Hoare, 11 March 1932, published in the *Leader* (Allahabad), 14 September 1932.

[93] The bolstering of Hinduism against the west as an important motive for the fast was suggested by Gandhi's comment: 'My whole being rebels against this idea that in a system called democratic, one man should have the unfettered power of affecting the destiny of an ancient people numbering over three hundred million.' An interesting comment for a civil disobedience dictator. *Leader* (Allahabad), 14 September 1932.

[94] *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. LI, pp. 128–9.

of the Indian nation as being comprised of 'an ancient people', suffering through the short-sighted and modern impositions of the west, again made the Hinduism which needed protecting appear to be the force which bound the nation. The analogy made between Hinduism and the nation, through opposition to imperialism, was made explicit by Gandhi in a letter to the Prime Minister in September: 'In the establishment of separate electorates at all for the "depressed classes" I sense the injection of poison that is calculated to destroy Hinduism.'[95]

The response in UP to Gandhi's fast was phenomenal. In virtually every district and town of the province efforts were made to open up wells and temples to so-called 'untouchables'. Havan (Brahmanical fire sacrifice) ceremonies were performed. Mass meetings involving depressed classes were organised under Congress auspices, at which untouchables were requested to pledge their support for Gandhi and for joint electorates. In the responses of political leaders there was again a curious overlap between notions of community that transcended 'communalism', a need to overcome Hindu vulnerability and a simultaneous critique of western representative politics. The sudden sympathy for the plight of 'depressed classes' was firmly based in a striving for national integrity. The need to save Gandhi from death was in most cases seen as representing that struggle, and Gandhi certainly appreciated the coercive nature of his fast.[96] As Babu Rajendra Prasad declared in a speech in Banaras on 13 September, the Hindu community simply had to solve the question of depressed classes if Mahatma Gandhi was to be saved. In Allahabad, during a meeting attended by Uma Nehru, Hriday Nath Kunzru and Dr Kashi Narayan Malaviya, M. K. Acharya made the link between the politics of the nation and the plight of Hinduism very clear:

> I am glad . . . that Mahatmaji is finding out the pernicious effects of denational [*sic*] politics on Hinduism. I hope he will soon find out, rather reproclaim what he hinted long ago in his 'Hind Swaraj' that all western civilization, economic, social and political is the work of the evil spirit and that England and India nay all the world, must be saved by the children of India's god-seers from modern 'demonocracy'.[97]

[95] M. K. Gandhi to Ramsay MacDonald, 9 September 1932, published in *Leader* (Allahabad), 14 September 1932.

[96] In an interview for S. M. Mate and P. N. Rajbhoy on 21 September 1932, Gandhi highlighted the need for caste Hindu cooperation: 'for the pact to be a living pact, it is absolutely necessary that it should be a condition precedent to an acceptance of the political part of it, that the caste Hindus party to the pact will not only endorse it but actively move in the matter'. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. LI, pp. 116–20.

[97] *Leader* (Allahabad), 16 September 1932.

For many observers in UP, Gandhi's stand for Hinduism demonstrated the power of religion in the life of the nation. Indian religion could never be accessed by the understanding of the British. During a meeting at Bareilly, on 13 September, Babu Saresh Kumar remarked: 'Sir Samuel Hoare and men of his way of thinking can never hope to realise the spiritual significance of Mahatmaji's unique and lofty resolve to fast unto death on a matter of vital principle.'[98] The most important consequence of Gandhi's fast was that Hinduism and the Hindu people were directly associated with the nation itself, struggling not only for swaraj but against the very foundational principles of a representative system that permitted 'special interests'. The struggle against untouchability became a means of maintaining the nation's homogeneity, through Hindu consolidation.

This had two implications. Firstly, Congress ideologies which espoused the absorbency of Hinduism as a national and cosmopolitan force were given new authority. Secondly, there was a renewed alliance of interest between Congress bodies and local Hindu Sabhas and Arya Samaj organisations in the districts and towns of UP. No one articulated the idea of using Hinduism's inclusiveness to strengthen the nation more coherently than Gandhi himself:

> For me religion is one in essence, but it has many branches and if I, the Hindu branch, fail in my duty to the parent trunk I am an unworthy follower of that one indivisible, visible religion . . . My nationalism and my religion are not exclusive, but inclusive and they must be so consistently with the welfare of all life.

This ideology incorporating religion with the nation was also articulated by India's most influential and forceful intellect. On 20 September, in a speech at Viswa Bharat University, Santiniketan, Rabindranath Tagore alluded to the overlap between the physical and spiritual nation, cleverly echoing the current ideas on untouchable uplift: 'Each country has its own inner geography where her spirit dwells and where physical force can never conquer even an inch of ground.' A week later, in a birthday tribute to Gandhi, Tagore fittingly continued the theme: 'India is not

[98] *Ibid.*, 18 September 1932. Men of Hoare's way of thinking were more obviously affected by an imperial outlook. Alexander Inglis, writing in January 1935, described the Indians as a people 'whose political feelings are primarily emotional, and who are influenced greatly by questions of prestige'. Later, Inglis added: 'It may be said that an Indian nation does not exist. Well, I can only say that in my not quite negligible experience in the East, the Indian, whether Hindu or Muslim, low caste or high . . . is instinctively recognised by Turk, Arab, Egyptian, Persian or Armenian as something *sui generis*.' Inglis to Hoare, 10 January 1935, Hoare Papers VII, August 1931–2, Cambridge University Library.

merely a geographical entity but is a living truth in which they [Indians] live, move and have their being.'[99] Tagore carried on a detailed correspondence with Gandhi throughout 1932 and 1933 on the subject of the 'harijan' campaign. Despite his enthusiasm for the principles highlighted by Gandhi's movement, he too was alive to the communal implications of untouchable uplift, and actually revealed that the campaign of uplift had a clear political agenda. In September 1932 he wrote that, now the struggle for untouchables had been achieved, it was necessary to win over the Muslims 'to our cause . . . for there is a deeply rooted antipathy against the Muslims in most of our people and they also have not much love for ourselves'.[100]

Gandhi's own references to Hinduism involved a strategy of using moral and religious questions to bolster a political standpoint. The juxtaposition of ideas about 'Hindu' religion with the moral and political integrity of the nation suggested that Gandhi possessed a concept of 'Hindu community', and, importantly, that he related its welfare to India. Unlike many other Congressmen who, whilst using a sense of religiosity in their political appeals, rarely described their religion with the actual title 'Hindu', Gandhi was very free in his descriptions of 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism'. In his writings leading up to and after the fast he talked of conversions 'from' Hinduism as if it were were an actual religious sect: 'It speaks volumes for their loyalty for the innate virtue of hinduism that millions of harijans have clung to it.'[101] and 'An untouchable who loves his Hinduism in the face of persecution at the hands of those Hindus who arrogate to themselves a superior status is a better Hindu.'[102] Interestingly, Gandhi also used religious references to describe his fast. To one correspondent he wrote: 'Krishna himself roused me and urged me not to miss this opportunity.'[103]

Gandhi's fasts prompted a widespread response in UP, out of which similar claims about the Hindu community's 'national' characteristics were made. As a result, the all-embracing cosmopolitan Hinduism – the third set of political languages, set up in opposition to the specific context of the Award – was strengthened through the response to uplift. Significantly, an appeal to a sense of Hindu unity, which in other circumstances

[99] *Leader* (Allahabad), 25 and 29 September 1932.

[100] Letter to Gandhi, 30 September 1932, in Andrew Robinson and Krishna Dutta, eds., *Selected Letters of Rabrindranath Tagore* (Cambridge, 1997).

[101] *Harijan*, 26 October 1935.

[102] *Young India*, 4 June 1925.

[103] Letter to Puratan Buch, 2 October 1932, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. LI, p. 168. In a letter to Rameshwardas Poddar, Gandhi stated that: 'The fast is not mine but that of Rama. If it is unfruitful He will be blamed, not I, and if fruitful He not being concerned with promises, I, a beggar at his door, will accept it.' *Ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

would have been considered an act of communalism, was used to counter the 'communalism' of separate representation for 'depressed classes'. Once again religion was detached from ideas about 'communalism'. Those involved in this language of Hindu unity did not see any connection to the hard-line ideologies of Hindu 'sangathan' voiced by the Hindu right. Yet the new concentration on untouchable uplift allowed connections to be made between Congress nationalism and the Arya Samaj and Hindu Sabhas.

A resulting assumption that some constructive aspects of civil disobedience reflected the ideals of fervent Hindu 'communalists' could hardly be avoided. Early in 1930 untouchable uplift had been freely incorporated into the wider programme of civil disobedience, which included general boycotts of foreign goods. For example, on 8 March 1930 in Muzzafarnagar, meetings of the Achhut Uddhar Sabha, an important 'depressed classes' political institution in UP, were addressed by prominent Congress leaders, including Purushottam Das Tandon, an activist in the Servants of the People Society, and Algu Rai Shastri, a socialist who also took an interest in the activities of the Arya Samaj. Resolutions were passed on the usual subjects like foreign-cloth boycott, as well as on the removal of social restrictions on 'depressed classes'.[104] Some unlikely alliances were formed on these occasions between supposedly 'left' and 'right'-wing Congressmen, on subjects which treated the subject of Hindu society. The suggestion here was that where religion, or more specifically Hinduism, impinged on nationalist politics, 'political ideology' in the sense of linear scales of social and political consciousness disappeared.[105] One such occasion saw the association of the Banaras socialist Sampurnanand with the 'right-winger' Madan Mohan Malaviya and the intellectual Bhagwan Das. On 18 September 1932, just before Gandhi's fast, these three organised a meeting at Banaras Hindu University at which they called upon the leaders of the Hindu community to give up depressed class representation without segregating them. Instead it was necessary to wipe away the disadvantages suffered by members of the 'depressed classes' and to 'lift them up' economically, socially, religiously and politically.[106]

Some Congressmen were certainly alive to the dangers that the politics of religion could have for communal relations. In a telegram to Gandhi on 26 September 1932, Jawaharlal Nehru commented: 'Freedom must be judged by freedom of the lowest but feel danger other issues obscuring only goal. Am unable to judge from religious view-point. Danger

[104] PAI 22 March 1930.
[105] This ideological shift will be examined in more detail in chapter 4.
[106] *Leader* (Allahabad), 17 September 1932.

your methods being exploited by others . . . '.[107] Nehru's predictions were correct. Whilst local Congress bodies in UP were organizing meetings demonstrating a rapprochement with the 'depressed classes', the Hindu Mahasabha was also stressing the need to bring untouchables back into the fold for national reasons. At a meeting of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha in New Delhi on 24 September, Kelkar observed that the move to create separate electorates reflected 'a desire to cripple, as far as possible, the Hindu community which in the opinion of the government has been evincing perhaps unpleasant or excessive political activity and national consciousness in this country'.[108] Kelkar did note that it would be dangerous to start non-cooperation now that 'other communities' might well take advantage of the new constitution. Nevertheless, the views expressed at this meeting strongly echoed the language about threats to Hinduism used by Gandhi himself and some of his social reformer supporters in the Congress.

Congress–Hindu Sabha/Arya Samaj connections were diverse.[109] At Ballia, on 16 September 1932, the town Hindu Sabha organised a large protest meeting under the direction of Dhari Ram Dhobi which protested against separate electorates and pledged its support for Gandhi. On 15 September the Congress socialist Sampurnanand, later to be Minister for Education in the Congress ministry of the late 1930s, presided over an open session of the Banaras Hindu Sabha. Over 3,000 participants listened to speeches on the social equality of the depressed classes. At this meeting it was not difficult to spot the parallels made by Congressmen themselves between Muslims and 'depressed classes'. Rajendra Prasad, for example, commented in his speech that if the depressed classes were allowed separate electorates, the nation would face the same 'trouble' that it was experiencing with the Muslims. At Saharanpur the local Hindu Sabha announced meetings on Gandhi's behalf. At Bara Banki the ex-Congress president of the district, Krishnanand, and Ram Narayan

107 *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. LI, p. 134. Nehru and some of the other Congressmen on the left had a theoretical difficulty in accepting that 'there is nothing so bad as untouchability in the world'. Baren Ray, ed., *Gandhi's Campaign Against Untouchability 1933–34: An Account from the Raj's Secret Official Reports* (New Delhi, 1996), p. 11.

108 *Leader* (Allahabad), 26 September 1932.

109 This alliance is all the more significant in the context of more general overviews of UP politics in the mid-1930s, which stress the growth of the left wing. By September 1934, the president, four vice-presidents and four of the six secretaries in the UPPCC were labelled as Congress socialists. Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 71. Yet between 1932 and 1934 Congress organisations across UP had worked alongside 'right-wing' sabhas for untouchable uplift. Clearly the growth of left-wing politics in UP in the mid-1930s was not incompatible with the continued significance of a religious idiom in politics. See chapters 4 and 5.

organised a Hindu Sabha meeting on 8 October, attended by 300 people, to discuss the need for untouchable uplift in the district.[110] The activities of the Arya Samaj were even more extensive in support of Gandhi's protest. At Budaun, Fatehpur, Gorakhpur and Kheri, untouchables were encouraged to distribute sweetmeats at meetings and to enter newly opened temples. In Saharanpur and Sitapur the Congress and Arya Samaj formed joint committees to encourage 'depressed class' meetings which would declare in favour of joint electorates. For a long time after the fast, appreciation of Gandhi was repeatedly expressed in meetings of the Arya Samaj. For example, at Agra on 9 November, Ram Anugarh Vyas made a long speech on untouchable uplift and the greatness of Gandhi. At Allahabad, on 17 December, an 'Anti-Untouchability Day' was celebrated with éclat under the joint auspices of the local Arya Samaj and Hindu Sabha.[111]

Although, at the beginning of this section, the political languages of the Samaj on the one hand and of Congress notions of Hindu unity on the other were separated, in the context of uplift they came to be mutually reinforcing. Essentially it was the marriage between religion, political development and modernity which provoked Indian opposition to the uplift movement from other quarters. Both Congressmen and Hindu Sabhaites were party to this new notion of community and nation, attempting to use elements of Hinduism which would have an enduring appeal within a mass movement, but which would also invoke Indian views of 'western' rationalism. It is important to look at the content of this political idiom more closely. Old arguments arose between those who desired to retain elements of custom and tradition, and others who saw religion as more active and politically relevant without extraneous customs. The disputes between sanatanists (orthodox Hindus) and reformers painted the picture of Hindu political activism more sharply and seemed to illustrate a Congress desire to be at the forefront of a new revolution in Hindu society. One resulting Muslim view was to associate aggressive religious reformism with Congress politics. Congress appeared to be making Hinduism more rational and therefore more politically powerful. It was a secularised Muslim identity which, in a parallel way, was later to form the basis of the separatism of the Muslim League. Conversely, it was the more conservative Muslims of UP who aimed to maintain the traditions of Islam without political intrusion – the ulema – who made up the most important and influential section of Congress's UP Muslim support after 1937.[112]

110 PAI 24 September; 15 October 1932.
111 PAI 1 October; 19 November and 24 December 1932.
112 P. R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 163–5.

Nothing defined this language of rational Hinduism better than its opposition. Much of the sanatanist reaction to untouchable uplift was based on the idea of the non-interference of politicians and legislators in the religious life of India. This was made particularly evident in May 1934 with the proposed legislation for an Untouchable Abolition Bill. Congress was depicted as supporting the intrusion of legislation into the depths of 'Hindu traditions'. It also appeared to be advocating a strengthening of the pure and true elements of Hinduism which would help to create a more homogeneous nation. Despite its provincial-level pronouncements to the contrary, Congress now seemed to be allied to movements which aimed to influence the organisation of religion in society. This created consternation amongst Muslims as well as sanatanists. The UP Varnashram Swarajya Sangh, based in Kanpur, was at the forefront of the opposition to untouchable uplift, collecting 10,000 signatures against the legislative proposals of 1934. The Sangh declared that the bill would be 'a direct attack on the Hindu Religion and consequently in opposition to the policy on religious non-intervention adopted by the British Government since the August Proclamation of . . . 1858'. Whilst sanatanists and traditionalists used arguments based on custom and scripture to defend their position, reformists used rationality. Bhagwan Das commented on the 1934 legislative proposals by pointing out that it was rationally impossible to suggest that 'uncleanliness' could be heritable. Others maintained that Hinduism could be used to strengthen the nation, since it contained within itself rationalist impulses. Hari Krishna, a vakil from Sultanpur commented: 'Equality of mankind is an essential factor in Hinduism and anyone who opposes the Bill should be considered to have little knowledge of the principles of the Great Hindu Religion.'[113] The Nagar Varnashram Swarajya Sangh of Banaras sensed that advocates of untouchability abolition were not just concerned with social reform, but with a reinterpretation of Hinduism itself, and its relevance to modern politics. A spokesperson for this body argued:

> The Hindu religion is not a bundle of ever fluctuating ethical or political ideas but is a source system of religion based on the highest truth of spirit . . . The practice of untouchability has to be looked on from this point of view and not from the fluctuating market rate of modern ideas.[114]

In UP, then, Congress's commitment to religious reform as a drive for national integration was opposed at a number of levels and for varying reasons. There were also diverse reasons for Muslim wariness. On

[113] Printed opinions on the Untouchability Abolition Bill, Legislative Assembly Department, United Provinces, 11 October 1934, L/PJ/7/686 IOR.
[114] *Ibid.*

the one hand, the misgivings about social and religious reform expressed by the sanatanists were shared by influential groups of Muslims. It has been seen in the first section of this chapter that one of the main Muslim concerns about Congress's civil disobedience involved a fear about the maintenance of the unique cultural and political position of the Muslim community. From the beginning of civil disobedience, the issue behind which Islamic political institutions in the UP had been most united was opposition to the Sarda Act. Yet this opposition to reformist legislation, unlike the cases cited above, was not confined to groups who decried a sense of modernity in politics. Despite an awareness of Congress sympathy for Sarda, even Muslim nationalists used opposition to it as a focus for mobilisation. In Saharanpur, on 15 March 1930, attempts to form a Muslim Nationalist Party involved the strategy of taking the lead in the anti-Sarda agitation, so as to gain influence over Muslims in the district. In Faizabad, in the same week, Muslim meetings threatened civil disobedience if it was not ruled that Muslims were to be exempt from Sarda. In Meerut, Ahmed Said, Kifayat Ullah and Shubhir Ahmad argued against Sarda. In Moradabad, on 11 March, there was a public meeting which attracted 700 Muslim spectators in protest against the Act. The strength of the anti-Sarda campaign as a method of uniting Muslims was demonstrated by the involvement of two of the most important Muslim Congress sympathisers. In Kanpur, Hasrat Mohani announced that he would induce Muslims to break the marriage law by being the first to marry off his minor daughter. In Meerut, on 22 March, Bashir Ahmad, whilst attempting to persuade listeners at a meeting to join the Congress, also called on people to marry off their daughters in protest against Sarda.[115] Even Muslim leaders who sympathised with the Congress saw their own community as standing in an anomalous position in relation to issues of social reform. Consequently, far from being an ideology which might appear 'secular' and draw more Muslims to the Congress, the languages of a rational Hinduism created further Muslim reaction.

Muslim concerns about the blanket imposition of social reform had reached a critical point in Saharanpur at the beginning of March 1930. Moreover, objections to social reform were immediately linked to Congress's involvement in untouchable uplift. At Roorkee, on the occasion of Bakr-Id, Zahir Uddin and Balbu, members of the local Khilafat Committee made a declaration calling for the boycott of Hindu shopkeepers who had taken food with Chamars and sweepers in a recent episode of inter-dining. The conflict had come about as a result of a

[115] PAI 29 March; 5 April 1930.

new 'Hindu' identity assumed by the Chamars.[116] Congress involvement in schemes for reform of Hindu society brought to mind the representations of communalists that community defence was necessitated by 'backwardness'.[117] This had been one of the most important spurs to the Tanzeem movement, which viewed an apparent revolution in Hindu society as a reason for mobilisation. At the All-India Tanzeem Conference at Allahabad, at the beginning of March 1931, Maulvi Sheikh Zulfiqar Ullah decried the backwardness of Muslims. He said that there was a genuine need to be afraid of 'Hindu Raj' and that Muslims should not take part in a movement that would involve them in a double slavery. In other districts untouchable uplift simply provoked conservative Muslim disgust. On 12 April Pandit Shankar Dutt proposed to the Moradabad Municipal Board that volunteers should take over sanitary department duties, in the manner of Gandhi. The Muslims on the board collectively remonstrated that Shankar Dutt should rather follow Gandhi's example by going to jail.[118] It was also a question of representation. If the Congress could so fiercely argue for the inherent cohesion of political interest in the Hindu fold, what chance did Muslims have of retaining separate electorates? This was a central concern for most non-Congress Muslim groups in UP in the 1930s. In two weeks of May 1931, in response to renewed Congress approaches to Muslims in the aftermath of the communal rioting, Muslim counter-meetings in support of separate electorates proliferated in the province. Fatehpur, Kanpur, Kumaun, Bulandshahr, Bareilly, Banda, Budaun, Aligarh and Allahabad districts were all hosts to these gatherings. In Allahabad, on 19 April, a meeting to defend separate electorates recorded an attendance of 2,500, addressed by Zahur Ahmad and Dr Shafa'at Ahmad Khan.[119]

From the beginning of Gandhi's fast, in September 1932, there were reports of heightened communal tension between Hindus and Muslims which could be directly related to Muslim objections to the intense uplift campaign. In Budaun local Muslims protested over the joint Congress and Arya Samaj meetings preaching untouchable uplift. At Fatehpur a group of Muslims boycotted certain Halwais who had shared a well with untouchables. At Lucknow the orthodox Hindu objection to the opening of wells and temples to untouchables was supported by a

[116] The Khilafat Committee called the boycott because untouchables in the movement had steadfastly refused to take food from the hands of Muslims.

[117] Arguments against child marriage and the need for social reform as a way of strengthening the Hindu community were also discussed in Hindi journals. See *Cand* (Allahabad), 10, 1 (December 1931), p. 106.

[118] PAI 15 March 1930; 10 January 1931; 30 April 1932.

[119] *Ibid.*, 25 April 1932.

significant section of the city's Muslim population. In Kanpur city some Muslims actually severed business dealings with Hindus as a result of the untouchability agitation. In Budaun an Urdu notice entitled 'Sadaqat Islam-ki-Fateh' was discovered which urged Muslims not to have transactions with Hindus who embraced untouchables. At Muzaffarnagar, after Friday prayers, it became a regular occurrence for maulvis to request hearers to boycott those Hindu shops which had had dealings with untouchables.[120] Muslim movements and boycotts in opposition to uplift hardened in specific pockets of the province, particularly Muzaffarnagar, Budaun, Bijnor and Meerut districts. Well into November 1932, in Bijnor, notices were found asking Muslims not to purchase from Hindu shops. An Anjuman-i-Islam was also formed under Hashmat Ullah for this purpose. In Muzzafarnagar a popular Muslim speaker named Mushtaq Ahmad organised meetings across the province attempting to persuade Muslims to boycott Hindu shops which dealt with untouchables. At Budaun the boycott of Hindu shops became an on-going Muslim preoccupation. On 27 October, in this district, Khwaja Nizam Uddin requested Muslims not to purchase sweetmeats from Hindu shops during Diwali. At Meerut, after an intercaste feast at Ghaziabad, an institution calling itself 'Anjuman-i-Islam' issued an appeal to Muslims not to purchase eatables from Hindus.[121]

Gandhi's 'harijan' fast in May 1933 saw a repeat of these reactions, but this time some Congressmen's views had hardened. An extreme example of this was provided in Allahabad, during a depressed classes meeting on 17 May 1933. On that occasion, Mathura Prasad Kalwar, the District Congress Committee dictator, made a speech in which he warned that if untouchables did not join the Hindu fold they would be 'devoured by the Muslims'. The anti-uplift movement among Muslims in UP continued to gather pace in Agra and Bijnor, where Hindu shopkeepers who dealt with 'depressed classes' were boycotted. In Muzaffarnagar a pamphlet by Abdul Nazir claimed that the anti-untouchability movement was harmful to Muslims, and that every effort should be made to convert untouchables to Islam. Throughout June 1933 the Muslim resistance to untouchable uplift accelerated in Bijnor, Hardoi, Moradabad, Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar districts. In Muzaffarnagar city Muslims were instructed after Friday prayers not to eat from the hands of Hindus. At Agra, in the first week of June, a new Islamia Anjuman was established to set up Muslim-owned sweetmeat shops, and to boycott Hindu shops. At the same time, Congressmen and women continued to use the

[120] *Ibid.*, 8 October 1932.
[121] *Ibid.*, 29 October; 12 November; 26 November; 3 December 1932.

resources of the Arya Samaj to conduct their campaign. Under the Arya Samaj at Kashipur in Kumaun, a Congress leader, Uma Shanker, made a long speech on the need to remove untouchability. Hindu–Muslim friction and near riot followed in Mirzapur over the conversion of a Koeri girl to Islam. In Kumaun the conversion of two Hindus to Islam led to the stopping of Hindu credit-dealing to the Muslim community, and a reciprocating boycott of Hindu shops.[122]

The attempt to integrate untouchables into the 'Hindu fold' transformed a spiritual quest into another arena for communal conflict. Collective identification with a sense of religious community, and the need for its reform along political lines, made the separation of nationality and religious identity problematic.[123] The responses in UP to Gandhi's fast had strengthened the idea that the nation would be damaged by disruptive tendencies of political separatism, as implied by the Communal Award. Therefore it was assumed that 'Hindu unity' was a precondition for nation-building. More than that, it was the apparent activities of a strong, reformed, and politically literate and rationalist Hindu community as the backbone of Congress nationalism that provoked Muslim reactions. To understand why this language of a strong rational Hinduism became so dominant during the uplift movement, and why Muslims reacted to it, it is necessary to view its inter-relationship with other languages of politics. Firstly, through the particular practices of uplift and against the background of Congress's mobilising symbolism, it had become very difficult to separate out this new sense of rational Hindu unity from older discourses of 'sangathan' and shuddhi. This was demonstrated by the ease with which Congressmen were able to associate at local levels with the Hindu Sabhas. Secondly, this association between Congress and the Hindu right was sharpened by colonial representations of uplift in terms of a struggle for communal enumeration and the inability of the Congress to escape the logic of the Award. Finally, the stress on social and religious reform that the sense of rational Hindu unity evoked intensified Muslim reactions, as a result of longer-term reform concerns relating to Sarda. The sudden upsurge in movements for conversion to Islam reflected the degree to which untouchable uplift was associated with shuddhi in the minds of Muslim observers. There was also an ongoing fear, shared by conservative Hindus and Muslims, that Congress

[122] *Ibid.*, 27 May; 3 June; 10 June; 17 June; 24 June; 15 July 1933.

[123] In contemporary India, one writer maintains that Hindu nationalists have taken advantage of this problem through 'a systematic distortion of history, to the dogmatization and territorialization of Hinduism' which 'serves to "unify" the diverse Hindu community'. Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism*, pp. 39–40.

enthusiasm for a reformed Hindu community would allow it to encourage social reform more widely.

These reactions were reinforced by suspicions about the sincerity behind this largely high-caste-driven movement for uplift. It was clear that the problem of social degradation was not sufficiently separated from ideas of religious and ethical unity. This lack of separation really makes sense against a much more thoroughgoing critique of untouchability apparent in the Indian communist movement. Writing in 1922, M. N. Roy argued that without removing the practices which prolong untouchability, no amount of ethical propagandising would remove the prejudice. He had no hesitation in declaring movements such as untouchable uplift as a 'sanctimonious philosophy of poverty . . . Such philosophy serves but one object – to guarantee the safety of the vested interests.'[124] This comment made sense in the practical application of uplift too. Inability to separate social degradation from the question of Hindu unity meant that work for uplift was easily characterised in individual terms as part of a spiritual endeavour. The cleaning of toilets by caste Hindus was aimed at weakening the ego and strengthening humility. Rather than providing a collective formula, it was more often carried out in the manner of a personal crusade.

The UP Congress's involvement in cloth boycott in 1930 and 1931 and untouchable uplift in 1932 and 1933 limited its political manoeuvring. Moreover, by adding to the notion that modern political organisation and institutions might be contained within a reading of Hindu traditions, it set up a notion of the secular that was based on 'toleration' rather than outright rejection of the religious. This was a secular ideal that failed to prevent some Congress agents' drift towards the Hindu right. Both movements, of uplift and of cloth boycott, also illustrated how Congressmen were prepared to make appeals to religion, and to a sense of 'Hindu community' to bolster ideas about the nation. Khadi and the boycott of foreign goods used religious stigmatisation to assert Indian national superiority. National integration and the advocacy of joint electorates were themes popularised through the Hindu Sabhas and Arya Samaj during Gandhi's harijan fast. The response to the fasts also illustrated how the overlap of ideas about 'Hindu community' and 'Indian nation' could generate popular enthusiasm. But the spiritual sentiments evident in cloth boycott and untouchable uplift could not have made the nation more secure: Muslim reactions to both movements encouraged the misplaced

[124] Manabendra Nath Roy, 'Present Situation: Review and Perspective', in G. D. Parikh, ed., *India in Transition* (Bombay, 1971), p. 209.

view that Congress was not only a party supported by Hindus, but also a 'Hindu party'. The artificial constructions of the 'Hindu community' encouraged by these movements helped to strengthen the determination of some UP Muslims to assert an equally artificial Muslim communal unity. This process was facilitated by Congress's mass movements and through institutional associations. The next chapter will examine one such association between the Congress and the Arya Samaj.

4 The Aryan Congress: history, youth and the 'Hindu race'

The campaign for untouchable uplift, prompted by Gandhi's fasts of September 1932 and May 1933, revealed a harmony of interests between UP Congressmen and the Arya Samaj. The Samaj had moved beyond the confines of social and religious reform from an early date in the twentieth century, strongly identifying itself with Congress and extremist movements in the 1900s and 1910s. It was most prominent in Punjab in this period, but there were some important figures working in UP, especially in the west of the province. These included Bishan Datt, a swadeshi propagandist of Mirzapur, Dharma Bhikshu who edited an extremist daily in Lucknow, Hari Lal Gupta of Saharanpur, and Sundar Lal of Muzzafarnagar. Other Samaj leaders with an all-India presence also figured in UP politics, most notably Munshi Ram, Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhai Parmanand.[1] Munshi Ram (later Swami Shraddhanand) had inaugurated a system of education which imparted Vedic instruction alongside western learning at the Kangri Gurukul near Hardwar – an institution which was to form a propagandistic centre for the activities of some Congressmen in the 1930s.[2]

Whilst a number of Congressmen were embarrassed by associations with the Samaj in UP, especially in the light of the 1920s' 'shuddhi' campaign, the political context of the early 1930s encouraged Samaj–Congress associations. The Gandhian approach of 'self-denial' had attracted Swami Shraddhanand to politics during the non-cooperation movement in 1920.[3] This form of ascetic politics was popularised once again in 1930. Most importantly, Congressmen such as Sampurnanand, Tandon, Balkrishna Sharma, and a host of lower-level leaders harnessed the rhetoric of 'Hindu unity' to combine Samaj principles of social reform with political radicalism. Campaigns for the inclusion of untouchables within general electorates, for example, strengthened perceptions

[1] K. C. Yadav and K. S. Arya, *Arya Samaj and the Freedom Movement*, vol. I: *1875–1918* (Delhi, 1988), pp. 248, 255, 264, 300.

[2] Jordens, *Swami Shraddhananda*, pp. 66–102.

[3] Ibid., p. 107.

of Congress as an advocate for what were perceived as 'Hindu' interests. This side of the UP Congress was at variance with the provincial and all-India policies with respect to the politics of minorities. Here again, attempts by Congressmen in UP to conflate 'all-embracing' nationalist rhetoric with campaigns for Hindu unity were easily interpreted by minority groups as a form of Hindu nationalism. Congress policy towards those minorities was not at all clear, and perceptions of their 'rights' seemed to be based on shifting ground.[4] This chapter will examine the extent to which Congress's relationship with the Arya Samaj affected and constrained its policy towards UP Muslims.

It was not simply that particular Congressmen were also members of or sympathised with the Arya Samaj. Broader and more subtle associations between Congress and Samaj had a set of long-term implications. There was continuity from the religious rhetoric of civil disobedience, which allied Congress with the Arya Samaj, and the late 1930s' communal propaganda of the Muslim League. The depiction of the Muslim community as a homogeneous political force by Arya Samaj and Congressmen alike helped to define the nature of propaganda taken up by the Muslim League from 1940.[5] The battle lines between Congress and the Muslim League were partly drawn by this perception of religious community which certainly did not reflect Muslim diversity in the province.[6] The cumulative development of Congress's institutional image in the early 1930s, through its associations with the Arya Samaj, was an important element in the construction of this political fiction. It was an image generated by Arya Samaj interpretations of 'swaraj' – an individual and community freedom which, for many in the organisation, could incorporate the principle of Hindu 'sangathan'. The ability of Congressmen and Samajists to discover shared interests was itself partly informed by the free use of religious rhetoric and association by Congressmen in UP in the 1930s.

Although Gandhi's fasts helped, inadvertently, to publicise associations between Congress and Arya Samaj, social reform was not the only common platform. Members of both institutions, in varying measure, constructed notions of national culture on foundation myths that drew on Hinduism as an absorbent phenomenon. For Samajists, as well as for many Hindu Sabhaites, the representation of the nation using 'Hindu

4 Kesavan, 'Communal Politics', pp. 221–35.

5 Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 58. Jalal's argument that the Lahore Resolution made no reference to 'Pakistan' at all supports this general point. In fact, Jinnah maintained that the Hindu press had 'fathered this word [Pakistan] upon us', p. 71.

6 Sen, 'Secularism and its Discontents', pp. 25–30.

culture' could be enforced through religious conversion. For many within the Arya Samaj, shuddhi was often a prerequisite for swaraj. However, in the 1930s and especially during civil disobedience, this hard line reminiscent of the 1920s in UP was softened to come more into line with the Congress. It will be seen in chapter 5 that the ideal of national unity based upon an artificial construction of Hindu religious unity was taken up by key Congressmen in the late 1930s and 1940s, among them Sampurnanand and P. D. Tandon. Other Congress agents, working from a more localised base, realised that the asceticism and discipline entailed in Congress volunteer organisations combined well with the reformism of the Arya Samaj.[7]

This chapter will highlight four themes that serve to unravel the Congress–Arya Samaj relationship. Firstly, there were points of ideological contact between the two organisations. Both constructed historical myth from similar roots in their definitions of the Indian nation. Historical and mythical depictions of India in meetings of the Samaj in UP were highly reminiscent of the rhetorical themes brought out by Congressmen described in chapter 2, involving the ideals of a 'golden age' which could be emulated by modern-day nationalists. In this case the 'Vedic era' was emphasised. The deep-rooted heroism of present-day leaders was presented through references from the *Gita* and the *Ramayana*. A strong appreciation of India's need to overcome, within that history, the long-standing shackles of foreign rule was brought into the themes of Arya Samaj meetings. As in Congress gatherings during civil disobedience, Muslim rule was juxtaposed to British domination. The need to regain the purity of India's 'ancient civilisation' was repeatedly emphasised. This reading of Indian history drew heavily upon a concept of a great 'Vedic' past in which the corrupting influence of Christianity, Islam and a ritualised Hinduism were absent – a theme running through the writings of Arya Samajists in north India.[8]

The Arya Samaj and Congress overlapped in their institutional and political work, even as late as the 1930s. This will form the second theme of the chapter. There had of course been an earlier history of Congress–Arya Samaj cooperation through the activities of men such as Lala Lajpat Rai.[9] Then, as in the early 1930s, Samaj meetings frequently acted as areas for Congress mobilisation and propaganda. During district political

7 Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual*, pp. 226–36.

8 An example of how this similarity manifested itself most clearly can be seen in Sampurnanand, *Evolution of the Hindu Pantheon* (Bombay, 1963), pp. 81–90.

9 Lajpat Rai was at the forefront of Punjabi extremism and brought strong elements of Arya Samaj reformism to Congress gatherings through his paper *Punjabee*, especially up to 1907. Jones, *Arya Dharm*, pp. 253–79.

conferences and the tours of provincial Congress leaders, its organisations were at the forefront in offering addresses of support and loyalty. These associations did not always operate through direct institutional connections. Sometimes they were manifested in the vocal support of particular individuals: the details of Congress's constructive programme were a common subject of Arya Samaj meetings, often being combined with the ideological asceticism which called for a return to the ideals of the 'Vedic age'. Swadeshi, use of the charkha and home-spun became part of a religious duty as well as a political necessity. The heroes of Congress meetings were equally eulogised by members of the Arya Samaj. In particular, Gandhi was isolated for praise as an ideal religious role model. This was done with reference to the unique preconceptions of members of the Arya Samaj: Gandhi's patriotism was frequently compared with that of Swami Dayanand.

The concentration of the UP Congress on volunteer activity and the physical and intellectual training of Indian youth formed a third point of contact between the two institutions. Both the Congress and the Arya Samaj valued moral indoctrination and the building of muscular youth movements as a front line for satyagraha. The experiments of the Arya Samaj with the politically active Kangri Gurukul are of particular interest. This institution provided intermittent but important support for Congress propaganda activities in western districts. In periods when the Congress organisation was outlawed, it occasionally provided a political refuge for underground nationalists.[10] Its example was imitated by other Gurukuls in western UP. The Arya Samaj also took a joint lead with the Congress in organising politically active societies for women, combining an enthusiasm for social transformation with backing for wider Congress volunteer activities.

The fourth theme of this chapter will examine Muslim reactions to each movement. Most Samaj gatherings took a harder line than the tone of accommodation and toleration often adopted by Congressmen to attract Muslim recruits to civil disobedience. Shuddhi and conversion were regarded by important figures in the Arya Samaj as prerequisites for nation-building. For some in the Arya Samaj this included a belief in a form of eugenics, which not only differentiated Indians by religion, but also according to notions of race. 'Aryan' India was confined to specific ethnicities and not open to diversity. This extreme form of racial exclusivism was balanced by another view which saw Hinduism of an 'Aryan'

[10] The Kangri Gurukul had not always been a bastion of anti-colonial sentiment. Between 1913 and 1916 Munshi Ram (later Shraddhanand) had declared loyalty to the government on behalf of the gurukul, initiating a visit from the then Lieutenant Governor of UP, Sir James Meston. Jordens, *Swami Shraddhananda*, pp. 89–92.

nature being able to embrace all Indians. Here was an ideological overlap with Congress's use of an embracing Hinduism. However, Muslim organisations often conflated Congress ideas about Hinduism with the past and present activities of the Arya Samaj, and in some contexts Congress was even associated with the shuddhi of the 1920s.

Despite these important points of political and ideological contact, the popularity of the Arya Samaj should not be exaggerated. It was certainly the case that the Samaj's notoriety as a result of the shuddhi movement exaggerated its institutional importance, when the reconversion movement was avidly picked up by the north Indian press. In a similar way to the Hindu Mahasabha, the Arya Samaj was significant in terms of its ideological influence rather than through the hard figures of its UP membership. There were a number of Congressmen in UP who would not have described themselves as members of the Arya Samaj but who were nonetheless party to its nationalist rhetoric and religious asceticism. This could include Congressmen traditionally associated with the political left as well as the right, as this and the following chapter will demonstrate.

The Arya Samaj and depictions of the past: India's ancient 'golden age'

The Congress used particular foundation myths to imbue a spirit of attachment to the idea of the nation. The Arya Samaj also attempted to fulfil a nationalist agenda in this way but was motivated by different priorities. For the Samaj, the nation could be served by first looking into practical ways of strengthening the Hindu and 'Aryan' communities. However, similar imagery was employed in Arya Samaj rhetoric, despite the differences in emphasis. The Congress used loose references to India's ancient civilisation to attract diverse groups to a foundation myth of India which sometimes highlighted 'Hindu' consolidation. For some, this strategy involved a deliberate linking of public ideas of the nation with private notions of religious devotion or of popular culture and ritual.[11] The agendas of the Arya Samaj were more specific. Since the consolidation of the Hindu community was seen as a means of achieving swaraj, references to history and the Hindu past related to the decline of Hinduism and the need to rebuild the 'golden age'. The rhetoric of both the Arya Samaj and the Congress involved the rejection of foreign cultural and spiritual values. Arya Samaj thinking was also more specific in this sense, delineating the corrupting effects of Christianity and Islam in some texts. An

[11] Sen, 'Secularism and its Discontents', pp. 29–30.

example of such a text from the mid-1920s was Swami Shraddhanand's re-publication of von Hammer's *History of the Assassins*, to which he added an introduction outlining Christian and Muslim conversion 'conspiracies' in India.[12] Nevertheless, the proximity of the Congress and Arya Samaj approaches helps to explain how easily Congress activities were associated with the Samaj.

In the Arya Samaj view of India's history there was a belief in an unsullied ancient civilisation that had been polluted by foreign invasion. This was a dominant idea behind Arya Samaj support of Congress during civil disobedience. Whilst ancient Indian civilisation was evoked for nationalist reasons, there were also currents of thought which eulogised the past for its cultural and religious purity. In the early 1930s this was commonly articulated in terms of a sense of Hindu ethnic origin. This origin in turn justified movements for describing Muslim groups as essentially and originally Hindu. In Basti, on 11 February 1930, whilst supporting Congress motions on the boycott of foreign cloth, Hari Ram Sharma of Azamgarh emphasised that all Muslims were in fact past Hindu converts and that the nation should therefore be 'purified' by their re-conversion. For others, the 'weakness' of the nation-state in cultural terms was related to religious decadence. On 13 March speeches made at the gurukul at Jwalapur described how the nationalist movement had suffered from a long-term decline of Hinduism. At the same meeting one Chindanand Sanyasi of Delhi talked on shuddhi, and the need to exclude Muslims from 'the coming struggle' of civil disobedience. Again, at the same meeting, the decline of India's ancient purity was also related to foreign invasion itself – an idea more in line with Congress's use of Hindu rhetoric. This then linked through to and formed a dialogue with the more economic and historical arguments which discussed the nature of colonialism – another preoccupation of the Congress. During the anniversary of the Kangri Gurukul, between 3 and 6 April 1931, Narayan Swami talked at length about how the 'ancient wealth of India' had attracted a variety of foreigners, leading to its despoilation.[13] There was often a small step, then, from the race-related ideas of shuddhi sympathisers to the Arya Samaj rhetoric in line with Congress evocations of India's past. The official UP Congress interpretation of India's past was picked up on later in the 1930s as concentrating too much upon ancient 'Hindu' history.[14] In other contexts Congress attempts to use Indian history could be highly

[12] Jordens, *Swami Shraddhananda*, pp. 149–50.
[13] PAI 22 February; 22 March 1930; 11 April 1931.
[14] K. K. Aziz, *Muslims Under Congress Rule, 1937–1939: A Documentary Record*, 3 vols. (Islamabad, 1978), vol. I, pp. 185–6. This complaint related specifically to Congress's Wardha education scheme. For more details see chapter 5, p. 175.

secular.[15] Yet a sense of the secular in the minds of many leading Arya Samaj and Congress publicists was not inconsistent with a view of India's consolidated 'Hindu' past.

The Arya Samaj's depiction of India's ancient civilisation, like the ideas of Gandhian Congressmen, attempted to reverse the notions of western superiority. As a result, India's past was described as 'prior' to the west and absorbent of it. This theme was a common feature of nationalist speeches in Arya Samaj meeting halls during civil disobedience. At an Arya Samaj meeting in Allahabad, on 28 October 1931, one Satya Deva addressed an audience of 400, tracing the history of the Aryans. In his speech he declared that Christ was a follower of Buddha and pointed to the need to attain swaraj on the basis of eastern culture. The Arya Samaj also evoked the Vedas to justify defiance of the British, as Congressmen had done at large public meetings in the cities of UP.[16] At another meeting in Saharanpur, after the singing of nationalist songs, Vidya Vrat of Dehra Dun said that it was clearly laid down in the Vedas that foreign cloth should not be used and that a foreign king should not be acknowledged. In Lucknow, on 9 May 1931, at a meeting of the Arya Kumar Sabha, Kunwar Arangi Singh of Amethi quoted passages from the *Satyarthprakash* to prove that political activism was an integral part of the Aryan religion.[17] This was a real development on Arya Samaj proclamations from earlier in the century that the Arya Samaj should not be considered to be a political organisation.[18]

As with Congress's political rhetoric, models of India's Hindu past were used to emphasise the illegitimacy and unnaturalness of the British presence. The subject was highlighted not only through criticisms of foreign rule, but by talking about whole 'civilisations': India's unique civilisation was described as inaccessible to the west.[19] Foreigners were sometimes even depicted as culturally and religiously polluting. For example, at Deoband in Saharanpur on 25 November 1932, the Arya Samajist Pandit Radra Dutt of Lucknow advised the audience to abandon all western forms and instead to purify themselves by offering their sacrificial services

15 'The Congress Kanpur Enquiry Report', in Barrier, *Roots of Communal Politics*, pp. 51–160. This report on the Kanpur riot highlighted the need for a rewriting of Indian history for schools, so that the syncretism of Indian religious life was emphasised. Muslim toleration in the Mughal period was highlighted, suggesting that India was moving toward cultural and political synthesis.

16 For example, as related in chapter 2, p. 71, even figures like Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi indulged in this style of propaganda, but invoked the Puranas rather than the Vedas.

17 PAI 7 November; 7 February; 16 May 1931.

18 Jordens, *Swami Shraddhananda*, pp. 89–91.

19 In Congress, Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha and Hindu Sabha meetings the phrase 'India's ancient civilisation' or 'the genius of our civilisation' was a common refrain.

to civil disobedience. There were reflections here of Congress's evocation of the polluting characteristics of foreign cloth during the hartals. In Moradabad in August 1931 Desh Bandhu urged a young Arya Samaj audience to follow the example of Gandhi. He developed the notion of ritual pollution with the claim that the government had taken canals out of the Ganges and polluted it. In Ayodhya on 28 July an Arya Samaj member, Bhola Kahar, made a speech in which he claimed that the helpers of the British were likely to become lepers.[20]

Here was a combination of the rhetoric used by Congressmen, which drew on ideas of ritual pollution, with a condemnation of 'foreign' influences in India on the basis of religious and cultural ideals. The associations of Muslims and Muslim rule with this category were even more easily achieved for the Arya Samaj. In March 1930 it was commonplace for the Arya Samaj to make public references to the analogy between the 'battle' of cloth boycott and the battle of Shivaji against the Muslims.[21] In Saharanpur in November 1931 Khan Chand of Lahore used arguments similar to those outlined above to criticise Muslims and the government as one unit in the long history of foreign rule in India. This link was also achieved through the cow-slaughter taboo. At an Arya Samaj meeting in Etawah, where Congress slogans adorned the walls, one poster declared: 'The Purchase of British Goods is the sin of killing a Cow.' These associations between Muslims and government allowed highly explicit condemnations of past Muslim rule. At an Arya Samaj gathering in Deoband on 13 March 1933, one Genda Singh spoke at length on the atrocities of Mahmud Ghaznar and Aurangzeb. This sort of rhetoric was a common feature of Samaj meetings throughout the 1930s. The Aligarh city Arya Samaj, in March 1938, during an anniversary celebration, advised an audience of 2,000 not to associate with Muslims: India belonged to Hindus, not to foreigners.[22] Congress rhetoric in UP more rarely related questions of cow slaughter and ritual pollution to the Muslim community itself, but the comparison of 'foreign' influence with ritual impurity was common to both approaches. As demonstrated in chapter 2, discussions of cow slaughter could easily allow the rhetoric about British and Muslim slaughter to combine. Historical references which related to notions of oriental tyranny and despotism were produced through a dialogism that built on colonial histories. That we see such similar refrains about foreignness and pollution in Arya Samaj meetings suggests that such rhetoric had pervaded the political sphere beyond Congress itself.

[20] PAI 12 December; 22 and 8 August 1931.
[21] *Sainik*, 8–15 March 1930; *Abhyudaya* 15–22 March 1930, UPNNR L/R/5/99 IOR.
[22] PAI 28 November 1931; 15 October 1932; 25 March 1933; 26 March 1938.

The rhetoric of the Arya Samaj was highly reminiscent of that of the Congress in one other vital component: the nature and extent of the hero worship of nationalist leaders. Just as in Almora and Kumaun in August 1936 Arya Samajists compared the rule of the British to that of King Kans, so too could Congress leaders be personified using mythical figures. Gandhi was frequently compared with Krishna.[23] This was illustrated by Baldev Prasad at a meeting in Bareilly on 5 September 1931. Interestingly, it was not just the outwardly saintly leaders who were celebrated in this way. Even Congress socialists were described as the incarnations of gods. Jawaharlal Nehru was also described in reference to the lives of Ram and Krishna in a popular lantern-lecture given by Desh Bandhu of Moradabad, in the Kumaun Arya Samaj hall, in August 1935. Bandhu concluded that independence would be easily achieved if one followed in theory and in practice the teachings of the Veda and the *Gita*.[24]

Similarities between UP Congress and Arya Samaj political rhetoric encouraged critical observers to describe Congress activity as a form of 'Hindu politics'. Two governors of UP in this crucial phase of the 1930s made such assessments: Hailey described the first phase of civil disobedience as a movement driven by 'Hindu' feeling: 'The Congress has succeeded in arousing a great deal of enthusiasm and much self-sacrifice in what is partly a Hindu revival and partly a genuine expression of Indian feeling against foreign rule.'[25] Later in the decade Haig made a similar remark in reference to the Congress ministry in 1938: 'The Hindus have been undoubtedly elated by the establishment of what is in effect a Hindu government. There is a good deal of popular feeling that this is Hindu Raj.'[26] These ideas, however, much prompted by political necessity or racial prejudice, bore a striking similarity to Muslim objections to the Congress. UP Muslims also sensed an underlying movement of what they saw as Hindu cultural hegemony beneath the outward protestations of secularism. Without doubt, the close quarters of Congressmen and the Arya Samaj in the early and mid-1930s allowed even the mildly socialist and ostensibly secular characteristics of the Congress to be related to the more exclusivist nationalism within the Arya Samaj.

[23] Gandhi himself was not averse to these comparisons. In a letter to Narayan M. Desai on 9 September 1932, he wrote: 'Krishna had spiritual knowledge. My knowledge is limited; and what a great number of Arjunas who ask me questions! . . . If I give a little of my knowledge to every one of them, how long would that *Gita* be?' *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. LI, p. 89.

[24] PAI 22 August 1936; 19 September 1931; 31 August 1935.

[25] Hailey to Sir Frederick Whyte, 15 September 1930, Hailey Papers MSS.EUR.E.220/19B IOR.

[26] Haig to Linlithgow, 23 March 1938, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/100 IOR.

Arya Samaj support for Congress campaigns during civil disobedience

The Congress and the Arya Samaj shared common forms of nationalist rhetoric, which in many cases reflected the ascetic spiritual nature of Gandhian mobilisation since 1920.[27] UP and local Arya Samaj bodies also overlapped operationally and institutionally. In 1939, after the resignation of the Congress ministry, local Arya Samaj organisations across UP accused the Congress government of betraying 'Hindu interests'. The sense of betrayal pointed to Arya Samaj assumptions that local Congress bodies had acted in these interests in the 1920s and during the early and mid-1930s. The two organisations had been closely allied in political objectives, personnel and even in institutional infrastructure. Arya Samaj meetings in the early 1930s often moved from religious discussion onto categorical calls for Congress volunteers, or for general support for hartals and campaigns for untouchable uplift. In the mid-1930s Arya Samaj halls and premises were used by local Congress Committees for meetings, and members of the Samaj played an important role in offering addresses of loyalty to Congress leaders during tours and district political conferences. In 1937, the Arya Samaj also made electoral appeals on behalf of UP Congress candidates fighting in the general election.

The Arya Samaj had always provided solid backing for Congress's 'constructive' campaigns. The boycott of foreign goods appealed to the religious asceticism of Arya Samaj members in its condemnation of western intoxicants and unnecessary luxuries. Swadeshi and foreign-cloth boycott were given an extra impetus by Samaj support. The Arya Samaj also singled out certain Congress leaders for praise, encouraging youthful members to emulate their lifestyles: Arya Samaj meetings had since the beginning highlighted the teachings and beliefs of spiritual leaders as examples.[28] As a result, Gandhi and 'martyrs' like Bhagat Singh were eulogised, sometimes deified. Acclaim of Gandhi was often another method of illustrating the greatness of Swami Dayanand. The Congress leader was compared to Dayanand at meetings in various localities across the province. The nationalist credentials of the Samaj were enhanced by suggestions that the 'swaraj' advocated by Gandhi in 1909 had been anticipated by fifty years by Dayanand.[29]

[27] For a description of this approach in early 1920s Gujarat, see Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual*, pp. 212–20.

[28] The most common figure to be singled out was Dayanand. Jordens, *Swami Shraddhananda*, pp. 76–9.

[29] Yadav and Arya, *Arya Samaj*, pp. 9–10. In *Satyartha Prakash*, Dayanand forcefully advocated 'swarajya' using the following passages: 'Let no man abide by the laws laid down

During the first months of civil disobedience in 1930, members of the Arya Samaj in UP made specific appeals for more participants in Congress protests. These were mostly of a general nature, calling for involvement in the 'nationalist movement' or highlighting the need for volunteers. In western UP Saharanpur, Moradabad, Firozabad and Etah were important districts, containing centres where the Arya Samaj persistently advocated the Congress cause. In the east Mirzapur city was important.[30] Within the central part of the province, Etawah and Lucknow were towns in which the Samaj demonstrated the strongest general support for civil disobedience. In Saharanpur, Jaimani Mehta was prominent in urging audiences to join the nationalist movement in gatherings at the end of June 1930. At a meeting in the city on 30 November 1930, in front of an audience of 200, he went so far as to suggest that the objectives of the Arya Samaj and the Congress were the same.[31] Arya Samaj newspapers echoed this sentiment. The *Garhdesh*, for example, published a poem which called on Indian patriots to show the mettle of their Aryan blood.[32] In Etah appeals for Congress volunteers were made in Arya Samaj meetings from as early as 21 March 1930. In Kolamai, Firozabad, the Congress used the Arya Samaj to attempt a more theatrical method of garnering support. At the end of March one Pokhpal, a Samaj singer, visited the villages of Kolamai to persuade kisans through the medium of song to join satyagraha.[33] At Lucknow, in the Civil Lines Arya Samaj hall on 11 November, Kali Charan, Sheo Sharma and Debi Dutt all made speeches urging the audience to join Congress volunteer organisations. The same appeal was made in Mirzapur in March.[34]

In the aftermath of the severe communal riots of February and March 1931, which resulted in strong Muslim condemnations of the history of the Samaj's shuddhi campaign, Arya Samaj support and backing to Congress did not lessen.[35] Many speakers called for a closer institutional

by men ignorant of the Vedas', 'A man should use all his influence and power to destroy a sovereign who does not happen to be acquainted with the intricacies of the Vedas' and 'A King should have seven or eight good, righteous, and intelligent ministers born in swadesh and swarajya who are well conversant with the Vedas.'

30 PAI January–December 1930. 31 PAI 5 July; 13 December 1930.

32 *Garhdesh*, 14–21 June 1930, UPNNR L/R/5/99 IOR.

33 Gooptu, *Urban Poor*, pp. 572–80. 34 PAI 5 April; 12 April; 15 November 1930.

35 This is remarkable considering the bad press received by the Congress in connection with the Hindu communal parties after the official Kanpur riot report of April–May 1931. It was claimed by Murari Lal that following a build-up of Hindu institutional activities on the pattern of Hindu 'sangathan' some prominent Congress leaders joined the Hindu Sabha. Evidence of Dr Murari Lal of the Kanpur Town Congress Committee in Barrier, *Roots of Communal Politics*, pp. 234–48.

unity with the Congress and congratulated the Arya Samaj for its role within civil disobedience. On 31 March 1931, during its twenty-third anniversary, the Jwalapur Mahavidyalaya (the university at Hardwar) passed a resolution that the Arya Samaj as a collective whole should participate in the 'freedom movement'. At Ballia at the end of April the Arya Kumar Sabha distributed leaflets among its members congratulating them on their services during civil disobedience. Two weeks later the same institution threw itself wholeheartedly behind the Congress candidate for the Mirzapur political conference. At Saharanpur, too, on 25 May, Sukh Deo of Lahore spoke of the important part played by the Arya Samaj in UP and the Punjab during civil disobedience. In other parts of western UP, efforts were made to aid the local Congress effort. In Agra on 9 November 1931 two members of the City Arya Samaj asked the audience at a 'havan' ceremony to help the Congress with men and money.[36] Two weeks previously the Arya Kumar Sabha had staged a drama entitled 'Chhatrasal', the profits of which went to the Town Congress Committee.[37] The enthusiasm for the Congress was so great from some quarters that it was suggested that the Arya Samaj as a whole should fall into line institutionally with UP Congress Committees. Professor Satya Vrat of Kangri Gurukul issued a circular proposing that the Arya Samaj should be reorganised on Congress lines, with Working Committees at different levels.[38]

With the beginning of Gandhi's 'harijan' fasts, some of the proposals for an institutional overlap between local Congress Committees and Arya Samaj institutions became a reality. In Aligarh, in September 1932, Congress meetings on behalf of the 'depressed classes' were held in the Arya Samaj mandir. At Kheri, Sitapur, Saharanpur and Gorakhpur there was the joint Congress and Arya Samaj organisation of untouchable groups to distribute sweetmeats and sharbat. The use of Samaj temples and meeting places became common. In November 1932 in Meerut a Congress flag was hoisted over the Gurukul Daurli. At the end of July 1933 Congress leaders in Fyzabad used the Arya Samaj temple to deliver lectures on untouchability and the need for its eradication. In Dehra Dun in July 1934 the Arya Samaj temple was used for the enlistment of Congress volunteers, and at Amethi, in Sultanpur district, a Congress office was actually operated from the Samaj mandir. In Banaras the Congress also took advantage of Arya Samaj premises. In October 1935 the temple there was used to celebrate 'Gandhi Jayanti', and in

[36] PAI 11 April; 25 April 1931.
[37] 'General UP Affairs, 1931', 23 October 1931, AICC file P-21/1931 NMML.
[38] PAI 27 February 1932.

August 1936 another Congress meeting was held in the Arya Samaj temple at Bulawala under the direction of Kamlapati Tripathi, Sri Prakash and Sampurnanand.[39]

As the general elections approached in UP, after the 1935 Government of India Act, district Arya Samaj organisations took up propaganda and offered loyal addresses to visiting Congressmen. For example, the Arya Samaj of Ghazipur issued a propaganda pamphlet in support of Congress shortly after the election.[40] Interestingly, Jawaharlal Nehru was especially fêted by the Arya Samaj in the closing months of 1936, as he toured the province whipping up electoral support for the Congress. At the Kangri Gurukul in Saharanpur in September, an address of loyalty to Nehru was offered by Din Dayal, a member of the District Congress Committee. In Bareilly district, at Biharpur, the local Samaj presented Nehru with an address of welcome on 23 November, pledging the support of its members for the Congress in the elections. In Sitapur another similar approach from the Arya Samaj occurred. The repeated enthusiasm from an institution for which Nehru had little personal sympathy led to embarrassments in other towns. At Bareilly, after the Arya Samaj had presented Nehru with an address asking for full incorporation into the Congress, the leader replied by denouncing the Samaj involvement in petty squabbles over swadeshi.[41] However, Nehru's appearances on the Arya Samaj platform were much less common than those of another Allahabad leader more clearly associated with the promotion of Hindi in the province: Purushottam Das Tandon. Partly through his influence, the use of Arya Samaj premises for Congress activity continued well into the 1940s. For example, in February 1946 Tandon made a speech at the Gurukul Daurli in which he stated that students should follow the glories of Aryavarta and Rishi Dayanand.[42]

A section of the Arya Samaj strongly advocated Gandhian politics in which the simple principles of asceticism and self-sufficiency were coupled with social and religious reform. This alliance of interests, which related most strongly to the untouchable uplift movement, dated from when the Samaj and the Congress combined in support of the Sarda Act. But the support of the Samaj for Congress's movements went beyond this on a practical level. As civil disobedience commenced, Arya Samaj gatherings displayed enthusiasm for foreign-cloth boycott and the swadeshi

[39] *Ibid.*, 1 October 1932; 5 August 1933; 14 July, 28 July 1934; 9 October 1935; 12 August 1936.
[40] See Arya Samaj, *Devotional Songs of a National Complexion* (Banaras, 1937), pp. 2–11, PIB 77/2 IOR.
[41] PAI 26 September; 5 December 1936; 9 January; 6 February 1937.
[42] *Leader* (Allahabad), 16 February 1946.

movement. In the first year, Arya Samaj activity in these areas was particularly evident in Mirzapur, Etah, Fatehpur, Saharanpur, Agra, Faizabad and Moradabad. Faizabad was especially active in the summer of 1930. At the beginning of May, Congress started a 'charkha' class in the Arya Samaj temple there. As the month progressed, Faizabad became an important focus for peripatetic preachers. Vidyanand of Banaras and Mukand Ram of Lucknow visited on 24 May, preaching abstinence and foreign-cloth boycott. Moradabad was also a focal point for these travelling propagandists. In January 1931 Rajendra Deo of Lucknow visited the Arya Samaj hall in Moradabad and delivered a speech on how national feeling would be strengthened through social reform and non-violence.[43]

For some within the Arya Samaj no contradiction was seen between Hindu sangathan and shuddhi and the more general swadeshi and boycott movements. Whilst one represented purification by direct religious conversion of individuals, or through religious organisation, the other involved a form of 'national' purification. The ease with which this comparison was made relates to the dialogue of languages that had already occurred within Congress symbolism, relating ritual pollution and purity to national movements. National 'purification' was also a theme of Samaj pamphlets. A poem entitled 'Parichay' described the need to be 'a worshipper of a purified India'.[44] In the early months of 1930, Hindu sangathan and khadi were discussed as combined themes in Kanpur.[45] The Congress's and particularly Gandhi's conception of the 'constructive' programme was actually believed to be a method by which the religious programme of the Samaj could be complemented. Constructive and boycott campaigns were viewed as ascetic and containing religious values in themselves.[46] Foreign boycott, for example, was ascribed with divine significance. On 15 June 1930 Sital Chand made a speech at an Arya Samaj meeting in Dehra Dun on the boycott of foreign cloth. He made the point that liquor and cigarettes were simply against religion: not against religion generally, but Hindu religion, as Raja Ram of Faizabad pointed out at a Samaj meeting in Bahraich district. Liquor and cloth boycott were held up as a religious duty, whilst the speaker abused Islam in the same breath.[47]

There was an element of empowerment in these proclamations. If the campaign behind the freedom movement was based on individual

43 *Ibid.*, 21 May 1930; PAI 17 May; 31 May 1930; 31 March 1931.
44 Gupta, *Khuun ke Chhinte*, p. 6, PIB 67/15 IOR.
45 *Vartman* (Kanpur), 21 February 1930.
46 Haynes, *Rhetoric and Ritual*, pp. 223–9. Haynes states that it is possible to discover core rhetorical motifs clustering around certain key 'metaphors' – for example, satyagraha is described as containing a 'dharmic battle'.
47 PAI 1 March; 20 September 1930.

spiritual control and duty, then the Arya Samaj could offer a means by which Hindus might achieve swaraj. As a great deal of Arya Samaj literature and a number of speakers put it, before Indians achieved swaraj they would need to control themselves, a classical Gandhian notion which, as will be seen in the next chapter, was reworked and adapted by a range of other Congressmen. For individual control to occur it was necessary to 'uplift' the entire subcontinent.[48] The element of popular control on nationalist activity was another integral part of Gandhian protest. Personal asceticism was linked to a need to discipline mass activity at periods of potential chaos.[49] With the concentration on untouchable uplift after the commencement of Gandhi's fasts, the Arya Samaj believed it could play a leading role in controlling nationalist protests. Indeed, several Arya Samaj institutions, most notably the Kangri Gurukul, were to act as centres of Congress-sponsored nationalist activity throughout the 1930s.

The Arya Samaj also empowered itself by creating associations with nationalist leaders, particularly Gandhi and Bhagat Singh. In some instances Gandhi's actions were appropriated to the Samaj itself, by suggestions that his ideals were a duplication of those of Swami Dayanand. These comparisons occurred in different cities across UP. At Aligarh in February 1931 an Arya Samaj leader claimed that Gandhi possessed such a spiritual force that bullets could not wound him. At the anniversary of the Kangri Gurukul, on 6 April 1931, Narayan Swami emphasised the leading role that the gurukul had played in the success of the Congress. He claimed that what Gandhi and the Congress preached at the time was preached by the founder of the Arya Samaj years ago. At Pilibhit one Shib Sharma went so far as to suggest that Gandhi was in fact a follower of Swami Dayanand. In Mainpuri, during Arya Samaj week at the beginning of March 1932, Jaimani Mehta praised Gandhi for his spiritual life. In Moradabad, during Samaj anniversary celebrations on 29 October 1932, after the conclusion of a Nagar Kirtan procession, speeches were made comparing the good works of Gandhi, Swami Dayanand and Tagore. The comparisons between Gandhi and Swami Dayanand, as well as comments on the Mahatma's religious soul, continued throughout the decade, with arguments that Swami Dayanand had advocated swaraj even before Gandhi.[50]

48 This was a theme of the poem *Lekhni* in Gupta, *Khuun ke Chhinte*, p. 13, PIB 67/15 IOR.

49 Sarkar, *'Popular Movements and 'Middle Class' Leadership*, p. 60. For Sarkar this theoretically helped Congress in its cross-communal appeal, since it was forced to compromise with as many groups as possible: 'Fear of popular "excesses" and social upheaval, again, made Congress leaders cling to the path of negotiation and compromise.'

50 PAI 28 February; 11 April; 18 July; 3 October 1931; 12 March 1932; 12 November 1932; 12 December 1936.

In the aftermath of his execution for treason after the murder of a British officer, Bhagat Singh also became the focus of Hindu nationalist and Arya Samaj praise.[51] During a series of Arya Samaj lectures in Dudhnath and Madhumeshwar in Banaras, at the end of June 1931, there were on-going tributes to and prayers for Bhagat Singh. In Mirzapur, Thakur Saheb Singh delivered a series of lectures advising his audience to join the Congress and to act on the example of Bhagat Singh. In Banaras, Bindeshwari Singh urged young men to follow the martyr's example. Ganga Singh conducted a tour of the whole area of Mirzapur and Banaras in August and September 1931, addressing Arya Samaj meetings, using Bhagat Singh as a focus for Congress propaganda and the creation of enthusiasm in 'Aryan' youth.[52] The martyrdom of Bhagat Singh also had a specifically communal significance. The ferocious Kanpur riot of 1931 had commenced around the Bhagat Singh hartal and thereafter the martyr had become the subject of general Hindu adulation.[53]

Institutional overlaps between the Arya Samaj and the Congress, whilst strongest in western UP,[54] were nevertheless accepted as a norm across the province. These Congress–Samaj alliances were confined to particular localities and in many cases related to the preferences of individual publicists such as P. D. Tandon. Through the late 1930s and 1940s he had built a particularly strong relationship with the Kangri Gurukul. But the Arya Samaj still sought to interest itself in the widest of Congress's principles and campaigns. Figures like Jawaharlal Nehru were fêted for their general contribution to the cause of nationalism. Gandhi was adored in the context of a fifty-year history of Aryanism. A common suggestion here was that the Samaj had anticipated many of the themes of Congress's constructive campaigns, and therefore might be considered to be an ideological forerunner of some of the most basic principles of civil disobedience. The details of constructive Congress activity during civil disobedience – uplift, home-spun, the boycott of intoxicants – were combined into an all-embracing vision of ideal national characteristics, which clearly related to the heteroglossia of symbols that had appeared in Congress mobilisations. These institutional and ideological relationships continued right up to the Congress ministry of 1937, despite the rise of the 'left wing'. Indeed, for many Congressmen in Banaras, Kanpur and Allahabad,

[51] *Abhyudaya*, 9–16 May 1931, UPNNR L/R/5/99 IOR. Bhagat Singh was compared to a person with Lord Krishna's philosophy of action and Sivaji and Pratap's war creed.
[52] PAI 11 July; 18 July; 8 August 1931.
[53] Written evidence of Zakir Ali, 'Kanpur Enquiry Report', pp. 423–32. L/PJ/7/75 IOR.
[54] Zoya Hasan, *Dominance and Mobilization*, p. 86. Hasan points to a strong Bania political presence in Western UP towns supporting the Congress and the Arya Samaj.

socialism and religious reformism could be mutually compatible – a theme which will be addressed in chapter 5.

The Arya Samaj, youth and physical culture: the Kangri Gurukul

The UP Congress and the Arya Samaj were keen promoters of youth movements, organisations for physical culture and institutions for the politicisation of women throughout the 1930s. The teaching profession had a tradition of being closely linked to politics.[55] There was also a broad range of youth movements loosely associated with the Congress as a whole in the province, the Hindustan Sewa Dal and the Naujawan Bharat Sabha being the most active in the first half of the decade.[56] The Arya Samaj possessed its own institutions in districts across the province, but especially in western UP, the most unique being the gurukuls of Kangri, Daurli and Sikandrabad. As will be seen below, the gurukul form of education attempted to break from the western model of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic institutions, but was never as successful.[57] There was a consensus of opinion on the philosophy behind youth movements and an institutional closeness between local Congress committees and the Kangri Gurukul in Hardwar. This relationship helped to create a continuum of activity between Congress ideas of youth mobilisation and manifestations of Hindu communal volunteer organisations.[58] Firstly, the Congress and the Arya Samaj had common objectives for the politicisation of youth – in some cases involving a rejection of western systems of education and an enthusiasm for volunteer organisation.[59] These systems would build on ascetic principles, such as brahmacharya (the notion of a religious student) and political service. Secondly, institutions like the Kangri Gurukul in Hardwar provided direct and enthusiastic support to

[55] *General Report on Public Instruction in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh for the Year Ending March 31, 1935* (Allahabad, 1936), p. 19. See Som Nath Chib, *Language, Universities and Nationalism in India* (Oxford, 1936), pp. 2–34.

[56] The literature of the Hindustani Sewa Dal also used a politico-religious message. In one pamphlet issued in Meerut it suggested that the 1857 'First War of Indian Independence' should be emulated, with maulvis and sanyasis going from village to village, calling people 'for the holy purpose'. The end of the pamphlet declared 'Your Mother expects you.' Hindustan Sewa Dal, *Call to Youth* (Meerut, 1932), PIB 29/28 IOR.

[57] Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 113.

[58] Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, pp. 126–7. Pandey highlights the overlap of Congress and Hindu Sabhas in terms of personnel: Narwada Prasad Singh was a Hindu Sabha man of Allahabad and a Congress member, and he helped organise Sabha-sponsored volunteer activity. Sri Prakash and Narendra Dev were also involved in the organisation of the Lajpat Physical Training Camp in Ghazipur in August 1929.

[59] Krishna Kumar, *The Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas* (New Delhi, 1991).

Congress volunteer movements, acting as a refuge in periods of government repression. Thirdly, both Congress and Arya Samaj organisations in UP took a particular interest in the mobilisation of women within the volunteer movement.

There was particularly close cooperation between the Arya Samaj and Congress in the planning and training of youth volunteer organisations. The contribution of the principles of the Arya Samaj to a wide Congress view of a purely Indian educational system was an important element in the politicisation of youth in Faizabad and Mathura. At Faizabad in June and July 1931 youths involved in the Hindustan Sewa Dal and Naujawan Bharat Sabha regularly held meetings in the Arya Samaj mandir at Ajodhya, during which nationalist songs were sung. Arya Samaj activity spread to the eastern districts of Azamgarh and Mirzapur, as well as to the west. At Azamgarh, at the beginning of April 1930, the Yuvak Karam Dal, a youth movement associated with the local Congress, received its drill training from an important Arya Samaj leader in the district, Mahadeo Singh. In Mirzapur in July 1931 Swami Sevanand, secretary of the Aligarh Naujawan Bharat Sabha, helped to organise another branch of the sabha, whilst continuing activities within the Aligarh Arya Samaj. Meanwhile, the Arya Samaj of west UP was consistently behind volunteer work in Dehra Dun, Agra and Mathura districts. In October 1935, at Bareilly, Kurma Kant Rao, leader of the Hindustan Sewa Dal, organised a joint campaign of social work with the Arya Samaj orphanage. In the early and mid-1930s, the close cooperation in Congress and Arya Samaj youth organisation, symbolised by the hoisting of a Congress flag over the Daurli Gurukul in Meerut, corresponded to an increase in volunteer activity of an explicitly Hindu nature elsewhere in the province. In February 1931 at Faizabad a vakil named Madan Mohan organised daily processions to counteract Tanzeem. In July 1930 in Saharanpur City an increase in the sale of swords and spears accompanied the commencement of volunteer patrols in Hindu mohallas.[60]

One institution closely related to the Arya Samaj stood out above all the rest at the forefront of the nationalist youth movement in UP. The Kangri Gurukul was founded in 1902, as a result of a desire to sever further the influence of western thought in education, after the founding of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College in Lahore. The aim of its founder, Munshi Ram, was the revival of the ancient practice of 'brahmacharya': the study of ancient Indian philosophy and the construction of a Hindu literature to rival 'occidental' thought. The gurukul was modelled on the

[60] PAI 19 April 1930; 1 August 1931; 9 October 1935; 14 November 1936; 21 February 1931; 9 August 1930.

famous universities of ancient India – Taxila, Sridhanaya Katak, Nalanda, Odantapuri and Vikramasila.[61] Throughout the 1930s, the gurukul was active in delivering youthful recruits for satyagraha. It provided vital moral support for the Congress in UP, when civil disobedience ebbed in 1934, and offered physical shelter for Congress leaders in Western UP during periods of government repression.

Early in 1930 the Kangri Gurukul identified with civil disobedience and satyagraha. During the 'annual session', between 13 and 16 March 1930, Ram Deo and Swami Satyanand led flag ceremonies, whilst new brahmacharis were given their diplomas. During the ceremony, the swami exhorted the assembled youths to 'serve the motherland'. On the last day of the celebrations, the Arya Youth Conference held a meeting at the gurukul. Once more, the need to serve the motherland was stressed, and this time explicit instructions directed the assembled young men to offer themselves for satyagraha. The importance of the gurukul at the forefront of Arya Samaj action on behalf of the Congress was confirmed in a speech by Professor Indra on the same occasion: if members of the gurukul failed to respond to Gandhi's movement, they would sully the name of the entire Samaj.[62] At the anniversary celebrations of the Kangri Gurukul a year later, the usual pronouncements were made on the need for the Arya Samaj as a whole to enter politics, and this relationship with Congress continued right into the 1940s.[63] Despite the possibility of tension with more syncretic Congress notions of national education, the Congress still managed to accommodate the Samaj. In Congress's report on the Kanpur riot, the need to accommodate Islamic history in educational curricula was stressed.[64] But this tension between the anti-Muslim pronouncements of the Arya Samaj and Congress's secular wing very rarely manifested itself in disputes between different groups of Congressmen in the 1930s, despite the breakaway of Malaviya's 'Independent' Congress Party. Clearly, the Congress organisation was able to accommodate a variety of political standpoints – a characteristic recognised by Muhammad Ashraf, as he tried to mobilise Muslim masses for the Congress in the late 1930s.[65]

[61] Earl Ronaldshay, *The Heart of Åryâvarta: A Study of the Psychology of Indian Unrest* (London, 1925), pp. 71–4. Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere*, pp. 113–15. The gurukul offered to contemporary Indians almost a 'tableau vivant' of what education would have been like in ancient India.

[62] PAI 22, 29 March 1930.

[63] Letter from Manohar Lal Bhargava to Chandrashekar Shastri, March 1941, AICC file G-5/1941 NMML.

[64] Barrier, *The Roots of Communal Politics*, pp. 14–16.

[65] Ashraf to Saxena, 3 September 1937, AICC file 30/1937 NMML.

Despite some reservations about Congress's policy towards the Muslims, the Kangri Gurukul remained as steadfast in its support in 1932 as ever before. In September of that year the gurukul assumed a role as symbolic institution of the nationalist movement, immune from the effect of the Ordinances and the repressive closure of Congress offices, and able to offer shelter to underground activists. At the end of March 1932, during that year's anniversary, Surya Deva condemned the official system of education and Nardeo Shastri announced that swaraj was rapidly advancing. Most of the rest of the staff and students were present wearing khadi. Again, the Congress's cause was associated with the Samaj when, on 27 March, during a Congress flag ceremony, Swami Swatantranand deplored the 'lack of spirit' of Kashmir Hindus under the 'oppression' of the state's Muslim majority. The following month, Deo Sharma of the Kangri Gurukul was speaking in Moradabad, urging members of the Arya Samaj to join civil disobedience. In June, gurukul students were at the forefront of processions in Hardwar which condemned district officers. By September, in Saharanpur, the immunity of the gurukul from government action was a source of relief and jubilation for the Congress organisation there, which continued to use the establishment as a base for operations.[66]

By 1934 the gurukul had been almost subsumed within the Congress organisation in Saharanpur, taking part in the untouchable uplift movement of May 1933 and the 'no-rent' campaign in the closing year of civil disobedience. The gurukul had always maintained a symbolic attachment to Congress nationalism in the 1910s and 1920s, but now organisational overlaps seemed clear.[67] At the thirty-second anniversary of the gurukul in Hardwar, between 30 March and 2 April 1934, a small procession was directed through the town, symbolically headed by a Congress flag. Along the sides of the pandal set up for the anniversary were nationalist slogans. Two weeks later, under the presidentship of Deo Sharma, the District Congress Committee organised a meeting in the gurukul to direct its 'peasant propaganda'. The Kangri Gurukul continued to assist in this activity for most of the rest of the year. In September it was once again used as a Congress meeting-place to coordinate the 'no-rent' campaign under the cloak of village uplift. The enthusiasm at Hardwar spread to the Gurukul Daurli in Meerut in February 1935, where students were requested to attend the political conference at Kirtal in support of the district Congress organisation.[68] The Kangri Gurukul's work in this period

[66] PAI 2 April; 14 May; 25 June; 10 September 1932.

[67] Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Education on Truly National Lines: History and Ideology of the Gurukul Kangri (1893–1921)', unpublished paper, Heidelberg (1997), pp. 10–14.

[68] PAI 7 April; 19 May; 8 September 1934; 23 February 1935.

was of course limited to Saharanpur and Meerut, and affected nearby districts such as Moradabad and Aligarh. Whilst the significance of the gurukul in the physical work that it did on Congress's behalf should not be exaggerated, its symbolic significance, as a result of its Congress association, was crucial.[69] This was especially the case in Congress spheres where nationalist ideology played a part: for example, educational programmes. By the end of the 1930s, the influence of Arya Samaj thinking on education was to create a Muslim reaction which contributed to overall Muslim estrangement from the Congress.[70]

The Kangri Gurukul continued its backing of the Congress in UP up to the elections of 1937 and beyond. In 1936 it was responsible for the protection of a number of Congress extremists, including the 'revolutionary' from Bangalore, Govindanandam. During its anniversary celebrations in 1937, its adulation of Congress principles reached new heights. Swami Satya Deo made a long speech on 'A Clash Between East and West'. Pandit Deva Sharma eulogised Gandhi's services to the nation. Satyamurti argued for swaraj, stating that the gurukul should be seen as a factory, producing soldiers to fight for freedom.[71] The gurukul's association with the UP Congress continued into the 1940s. In 1941 it prided itself as a national institution that served 'religion and Hindu culture'. At the 1941 anniversary celebrations, Congress leaders were invited to the gurukul for a programme of debates, poetry, hymns and a dip in the Ganges.[72] In February 1946, the 'Gandhi of UP' and Allahabad leader P. D. Tandon visited both the Gurukul Kangri and the Gurukul Daurli and whipped up support for his opposition to Gandhian ahimsa.[73]

The Arya Samaj also contributed to pluralism, albeit in a token fashion, within political movements. The Kangri Gurukul and other Samaj organisations continually promoted the inclusion of women within its political activities. In some districts Stri Samaj bodies were formed during civil disobedience. These attempted to incorporate women's 'household duties' into a wide definition of service to the nation. Yet such organisations still helped to bolster Hindu-inclusivist ideologies. During the anniversary of the Jwalapur Mahavidyalaya in April 1931, Anand Prakash Brahmachari addressed an audience of 500, including 100 women. The speech stressed how much both the Congress and the Arya Samaj appreciated the sacrifices of women for the motherland. In October 1931 a Stri Samaj meeting in Budaun attempted to incorporate aspects of household

[69] This assessment is supported by Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere*, pp. 113–15.
[70] Aziz, *Muslims under Congress Rule*, pp. 185–6.
[71] PAI 2 May 1936; 3 April 1937.
[72] Letter from Manohar Lal Bhargava, March 1941, AICC file G-5/1941 NMML.
[73] *Leader* (Allahabad), 17 February 1946.

economics into a discussion about khadi and swadeshi. Many of these organisations were also permeated by concepts of religious and cultural homogeneity. At Sitapur a 'women's sabha' was started on 23 October 1931, at which a resolution was passed declaring that swaraj depended on the connection of all religions to the Arya Samaj. In July 1935 Masammat Lachhmi Devi made a speech to the 'Girl's Gurukul' in Kumaun, emphasising the superiority of 'Aryan' culture and 'Hindu' civilisation and the inadequacies of English education.[74]

The principles of youth mobilisation and the widening of the relevance of the nationalist movement to women were important areas of Congress–Arya Samaj coordination. This was the result of the institutional convenience of Arya Samaj-related organisations in UP, especially through the Kangri Gurukul. The Arya Samaj backed up Congress ideologies that sought the unification of national culture. This inevitably affected Congress's secular identity. The principles of youth training advocated by the Samaj were ideal for the production of a new idealised community of citizens who would adhere to the systems of political communication which a unified Hindu-oriented national culture could produce.[75] Moreover, brahmacharis theoretically lived by the very ideals set out by Gandhian Congressmen, offering practical and ideological stability to an organisation continually threatened by regional differentiation.

The impact of the Arya Samaj on Congress activities was, of course, limited in an organisational sense by Samaj resources. The gurukuls, whilst providing the platform for nationalist meetings, did not produce a large number of graduates. Nevertheless, the symbolic importance of these Arya Samaj institutions was certainly significant, especially in relation to Congress's educational and youth movements.[76] This symbolism became important because of the number of Congressmen involved in Arya Samaj activities through loose association as well as by membership. As a result of the Arya Samaj–Congress link, non-Congress politicians were less able fully to differentiate between Congress's ostensibly secular pronouncements at a provincial level and Arya Samaj pronouncements on a unified Hindu national culture.[77] There was often nothing

[74] PAI 18 April 1931; 31 October 1931; 6 July 1935.

[75] Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, pp. 9–13. An invented homogeneous national culture (in this case based around Hinduism) helps to create the symbolism of social cohesion, legitimise institutions and inculcate value systems: 'the history which became part of the fund of knowledge of the ideology of the nation, state or movement is not what has been actually preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized'. p. 13.

[76] Fischer-Tiné, 'Education on Truly National Lines', pp. 10–14.

[77] 'Minority Problems', AICC file 22 1940 NMML; Minorities Committee Report', AICC file 25 1940 NMML. Both of these Congress files point to the UP provincial-level commitment to building a diverse communal base for Congress.

specifically communal or 'non-secular' about Arya Samaj and Congress pronouncements on national education and culture. But hints at communal consolidation, the use of religious imagery and the encouragement of Hindu ascetic practices combined neatly with local experiences of civil disobedience. Congress had made the Samaj's political language about national purity, unity and education its own. Hence the resultant meaning of Congress–Arya Samaj associations was to create the impression of a much closer and more profound relationship than actually existed. Despite attempts to assert a coherent 'minorities' policy at provincial and national levels, then, certain district of UP, particularly in the west, witnessed a close cooperation between Congress and Arya Samaj over the politicisation of India's youth.

The Arya Samaj vision of swaraj: Hindu sangathan and 'Muslim politics'

The last three sections have illustrated how the Arya Samaj associated itself with both the philosophy and content of civil disobedience in UP. Most Congressmen toed the provincial line, advocating religious plurality. However, this position was not inconsistent with the use of 'Hindu' rhetoric. Whilst Nehruvian socialists rejected the idea of religion as an active force in political life, other Congressmen saw Indian secularism and pluralism as part of Indian traditions – predominantly the traditions associated with 'Hinduism'. As was argued in the introduction, it was often assumed that religious, cultural and political plurality therefore could be incorporated into an enfolding 'Hindu' vision of the nation. The position of the Arya Samaj overlapped with this secular-inclusivist philosophy and in some cases was used to justify 'conversion' to Hinduism. As a result, a large amount of Samaj discussion of swaraj highlighted a necessary precondition of mass shuddhi or conversion. For some the actual adoption of a Hindu religious life according to 'Aryan' principles was an entirely necessary precondition for nation-building. This belief in the value of Hinduism for secular nation-building could lead to more extreme political philosophies. In the late 1930s this vision was associated with a form of eugenics closely tied to fascist ideas of racial purity by some Arya Samaj leaders.[78] This was potentially very damaging for Congress

[78] The discussion of an Aryan race by reference to National Socialism in Germany by some Samaj leaders was a very curious position to take in combination with shuddhi. Biological determinism hardly allows conversion to political or cultural principles, which the Samaj, as a proselytising sect, obviously advocated. Jaffrelot would explain this ideological contradiction on lines of stigmatisation and emulation: *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, pp. 16–17.

approaches to Muslims throughout the 1930s. The close association of UP Congressmen and the Arya Samaj on issues like education, swadeshi and untouchable uplift, and the political languages associated with them, made it difficult for some Muslim groups to differentiate between issues like harijan uplift and shuddhi. The often antagonistic attitude of the Arya Samaj towards Muslims was therefore, even at this level, closely bound up with perceptions of the UP Congress organisation.

The connections made between Hindu sangathan, shuddhi and the nationalist movement by members of the Arya Samaj became evident during Gandhi's harijan fasts. As was suggested in the last chapter, associations were made between untouchable uplift and the 1920s' shuddhi campaigns.[79] Hindu consolidation was an Arya Samaj concern from the beginning of civil disobedience, especially in western UP, in provinces such as Saharanpur, Moradabad, Agra and Aligarh. In Saharapur in January 1930 Sukh Lal gave a speech on the vital mutual reinforcement of nationalism and sangathan. In July, at Sitapur, Jaimani Mehta and Nathha Singh argued that sangathan was a means through which swaraj could be attained. At other places, Hindu mobilisation movements were described as integral to specific elements of the civil disobedience movement, such as cloth boycott. For example, at Arya Samaj meetings in Agra and Mainpuri, in the second week of October, swadeshi and sangathan were discussed in concert. At Sikandrabad Gururkul in November shuddhi was discussed alongside cloth boycott. At later meetings this could allow Arya Samaj activists to offer a challenge to Congress as the 'real' champions of a true 'swaraj'. At Pilibhit on 27 June 1931, to an audience of 3,000 people, Shib Sharma, a preacher from Moradabad, declared that shuddhi and the principles of the Arya Samaj would form the real basis of swaraj. At Aligarh, at the end of July 1931, Thakur Saheb Singh attempted to win over recruits to the Congress by laying stress on Hindu sangathan and shuddhi. At the end of the year the Arya Samaj at Banaras hosted Bishwanath Kalwar as a speaker, who claimed that the mass conversion of Muslims would surely bring swaraj nearer.[80]

Perhaps the violence created by shuddhi and the rhetoric surrounding sangathan, however, and the resulting infamy of the two movements, made association with other Congress movements preferable to competition for the Arya Samaj. Once Gandhi's fasts had popularised untouchable uplift, Arya Samaj claims for shuddhi and sangathan could

[79] Arya Samaj pamphlets often combined discussion of Gandhian nationalism and shuddhi. See Raghubar Dayalu, *Arya* (Kanpur, 1929), 'Chand Musulmano ki Haraktem Sher Kafiya Band', PIB 22/12 IOR.

[80] PAI 11 January; 2 August; 18 October; 15 November 1930; 11 July; 1 August 1931; 2 January 1932.

be more firmly rooted in the context of Congress politics. For example, at Brindaban Gurukul in Mathura, at the end of December 1933, an anniversary meeting was arranged in conjuction with the Servants of the People Society. Speakers urged cooperation with Gandhi and recommended the presentation of Rs.5,000 to help him in his campaign of uplift. Some of the speakers linked shuddhi with the 'harijan' movement. The linkages made by Congress sympathisers within the Arya Samaj, between the goal of freedom and Hindu communal strength, were not just limited to uplift movements in the mid-1930s. The bewailing of disunity as an explanation for the non-achievement of swaraj continued into the late 1930s. Swami Satya Deo continually reiterated the point in meetings at the end of August 1935 in Kumaun. The message still managed to find a place in obviously Congress-sponsored gatherings. In January 1937 in Allahabad, at a meeting organised by the Kanpur Congress leader, Balkrishna Sharma, Debi Dutt claimed that more conversion to Hinduism was required for general political advancement in India.[81]

Encouraging the mental connection between the physical and the numerate strength of the Hindu community and political advance helped to promote the quite artificial idea of a consolidated Muslim political 'view'. This 'Muslim politics' was seen by Arya Samaj reformers as reactionary and conservative. As Mushirul Hasan has shown, this essentialising judgement was a far cry from the reality of the Muslim situation in UP. The building up of a unified 'Muslim' party was in fact a 'tardy one', at least until the Congress ministry period, and was 'impeded by the differentiated structure of the "community", its regional and local diversities, and by deep-rooted sectarian and doctrinal disputes'.[82] However, the Muslim community of the Arya Samaj and Congress imagination helped to manufacture the idea of a 'Muslim' approach to politics. Muslim reactions to the Arya Samaj also seemed to feed off this interpretation, helping politicians to project an artificial Muslim solidarity when combating Hindu nationalist rhetoric.

The Arya Samaj justification for rekindling issues of Hindu reconversion and sangathan were based on this spectre of Muslim strength and cohesion. The Samaj, fearing the build-up of Muslim political organisation now that most Hindu leaders were in jail, had articulated apprehensions concerning a Muslim conspiracy in the last week of 1930 in Jaunpur. In March 1931 this was given as a reason for the active participation of the Arya Samaj as an institution in politics to combat the unified

81 *Leader* (Allahabad), 14 January 1934; PAI 23 December 1933; 13 January 1934; 7 September 1935; 27 February 1937.
82 Mushirul Hasan, *India's Partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilization* (Delhi, 1993), p. 5.

'Muslim mentality'.[83] At Kashipur in Kumaun, on the eve of Gandhi's fast in 1932, Sita Ram of Lahore made a similar point. Quite simply, the weakness of the Hindus of UP was due to disunity and Muslim strength to unity. Mathura Prasad Kalwar, Congress dictator of Allahabad, warned of Muslim strength in speeches in 1933. More significantly, the Arya Samaj view of Muslims easily infiltrated the politics of Congressmen as late as 1938. The representation of Muslims as a unified force was described by Thakur Malkhan Singh in Aligarh at the end of March 1938: in response to the baiting communal tactics of the Muslim league, the Aligarh supremo declared that the Congress did not fear the government, and therefore they should not fear 'the Muslims'.[84] There was an echo here of the more extreme earlier Hindu sangathan assertions of the threat of Muslim communal unity, some of which picked up on Mughal 'tyranny'[85] or simply set out the idea that Muslims were a much more compact community.[86]

Arya Samaj/Congress assaults on 'Muslim politics' actually encouraged the articulation of a unified Muslim political voice. The condemnation of Arya Samaj proclivities temporarily united elements of UP Muslim opinion that supported Congress, like branches of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, with stridently communalist bodies like the All-India Tanzeem Committee. At a Jamiat-ul-Ulema conference at Moradabad, in the first week of May 1930, Hafiz Hidayat Husain urged general tolerance towards Hindus as a community, but condemned the implications of shuddhi and the Arya Samaj. Association between Hindu reform and swaraj created a sense, even for Muslim Congress sympathisers, that there was a dangerous dimension to Congress nationalism. The same impulse led an ardent supporter of civil disobedience, Atta Ullah Bukhari Shah, to condemn outright the effect of the Arya Samaj on communal conflict in June 1935.[87]

With the appearance of the Muslim League's new political strategy of condemning Congress as a 'Hindu' organisation in the late 1930s

83 In the evidence given for the Kanpur Riots Enquiry Committee the Arya Samaj depiction of the muscular and organised Muslim community was a common theme. Written statement of Raghuber Dayal Bhatta, 22 April 1931, 'Kanpur Enquiry Report', pp. 108–11, L/PJ/7/75 IOR.

84 PAI 6 August 1932; 27 May 1933; 24 February 1934; 2 April 1938.

85 Vraj Ramanath Sastri, 'Bharat Ke Hindu Aur Musulman', *Madhuri*, III, 1, 3 (21) (24 October 1924), pp. 368–71. This article asserted that the Muslim community had always considered Hindus as their enemies, due to the policies of Mughal kings.

86 Earlier examples of this view can be seen in some of the Hindi journal literature. See Pandit Janardan Bhattacharya, 'Hindu Sangathan Ka Dhong,' *Cand*, 1 April 1924, pp. 438–40.

87 *Hamdam*, 10 May 1930 (translated for the author), AICC file G-44/1930 NMML; PAI 29 June 1935.

and 1940s, the Congress–Arya Samaj associations provided ideal propaganda material to blacken the Congress image. Direct documentary evidence for this is only available for a few UP districts – Meerut, Etah, Ballia and Bara Banki – but the significance of these local Muslim League complaints, alongside specific individual Muslim grievances against Congress, were crucial in ideological terms. At the end of 1937, in Meerut city, the celebrations of the Arya Samaj Pritinidhi Golden Jubilee helped to promote the publication of three books against Islam. In response the newspaper *Al Aman*, an avid supporter of the Muslim League, highlighted the Congress–Arya Samaj relationship in its condemnation of the new literature.[88] In Etah, throughout July 1938, Congressmen were bitterly criticised by the League for attending Samaj meetings in the city. This criticism was interestingly tied in with attempts to build up the Muslim League-sponsored volunteer movements in Etah district, which directly opposed the activities of the Arya Samaj and the Mahabir Dal. In February 1939, in Ballia district, Muslim League resentment was generated by the appearance of Arya Samaj posters, which called on Hindus to follow Gandhian principles of 'ahimsa' on the eve of Bakr-Id. On 3 June 1939, at a Muslim League meeting in Bara Banki, the Congress was repeatedly related to the Arya Samaj in speeches.[89]

Congress's association with the Arya Samaj could also contain a different kind of danger from that connected with the antagonism of Muslims. The nationalist rhetoric of the Arya Samaj went further than the association of shuddhi with the struggle for swaraj. The integrity of the nation was also imagined in strongly racial terms by some Samaj hardliners. By the later 1930s the eugenicist dimension of some branches of the Arya Samaj led to peculiar associations with European Nazism and a bizarre combination of Hitler adulation with Gandhian nationalism. Throughout the 1930s an important exponent of eugenic theories was Jaimani Mehta, alias Jamna Das, from Saharanpur. In the early part of the decade, depictions of the 'Hindu race' were mostly used as an argument for the building of a culturally homogeneous political nation. In Meerut, on 5 July 1930, Dr Satyapal made references to the 'Hindu race' in an attempt to claim that such a 'race' included untouchables, and that their separation was unjustified. However, the use of race theories could also be based on ideas of superiority and hierarchy. Jaimani Mehta wove India's ancient past into a theory of racial superiority. On 4 February 1930, in Saharanpur, he claimed that the discovery

[88] *Al Aman*, 4 January 1938 (translated for the author), AICC file 60/1937 NMML.
[89] PAI 8 January 1938; 16 July, 23 July 1938; 11 February 1939; 17 June 1939.

of ancient Hindu coins in America proved that the world was once all Hindu.[90]

The racial thinking of the Arya Samaj encouraged positive responses to Hitler's National Socialism in Germany. In Kumaun, on 20 August 1935, Satya Deo made a speech filled with references to Hitler, in which he made the point that the Führer had saved Germany from the crippling war indemnity. Jaimani Mehta and Swami Brahmanand in Allahabad took up a similar theme in November. After comparing the administration of British India to that of Japan, to the disparagement of the former, the claim was made that Germans were in fact the descendants of Aryan Brahmans, a fact apparently proved by the 'Om' badge on the German uniforms. At Arya Samaj meetings in Lucknow, in July 1939, Hitlerian Germany was used as an argument for the introduction of military education in schools, and Swami Satya Deo declared that the Samaj would soon be the 'dictator' of India.[91]

Arya Samaj representations of the nation were diverse. In certain localities and contexts a thoroughly Gandhian view of the relationship between Hindu society and national development existed. By the mid- and late 1930s, Arya Samaj nationalism could incorporate an appreciation of Nazism. These more extreme ideologies appeared particularly in western UP, in districts such as Saharanpur, but were also a feature of Arya Samaj meetings in important centres such as Lucknow and Allahabad. The idea of the 'Hindu nation' could mean a wide array of different things to different wings of the Arya Samaj. This of course related to wider contexts. The fashion for eugenics reflected an international trend of racially motivated politics. But taking into account the more specific context of UP, this type of rhetoric reinforced trends from the 1920s, from which the Congress had supposedly escaped. Ideas of racial purity somehow combined with Arya Samaj notions that conflated shuddhi with swaraj. This might be an Arya Samaj conception of swaraj that deliberately sought to challenge Gandhian and Congress-based notions. Yet, when the other evidence of institutional and electoral support and personal adulation of Congress leaders within the Arya Samaj is considered, the Samaj increasingly appears more as an adjunct to a broad-church Congress organisation. That organisation did little to combat some of the looser rhetoric which manifested itself both at the periphery, in local Arya Samaj meetings, and more centrally through the writings and

[90] *Ibid.*, 15 February, 12 July 1930. There were echoes of the thinking of Golwalkar here, who also derived inspiration from Hitler's ideology. Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, p. 55.

[91] PAI 24 August; 9 November 1935; 22, 29 July 1939.

speeches of key Congress leaders. The next chapter will examine this latter process in more detail. Through the agency of central UP leaders the Congress links with the Arya Samaj in particular, and with Hindu politics in general, could be maintained throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s. By the time of the Congress ministry in UP, there had been important moves to de-link Hindu Sabhas from the Congress. By 1939 local sabhas, the Savarkarite Mahasabha and Arya Samaj meetings condemned the Congress ministry for its 'pro-Muslim' policy. But the rhetoric of the Muslim League was still able to strike a chord, as it made accusations of continuing Hindu Mahasabhaite influence. It seemed that the political events of the late 1930s and early 1940s in UP, with the appearance of a strong 'left-wing' cadre within the provincial Congress, was unable to dispel some deep-seated ideas about how the Congress had represented the nation.

5 Congress radicals and Hindu militancy

The arguments of this book have so far stressed the importance of ideologies and languages of politics in generating ideas about nation and community. These languages of politics suggest that it is difficult to talk of a single Congress 'party', working and behaving according to a single coherent set of principles. If the 'secular' Congress was able to accommodate the Arya Samaj so easily, it is more appropriate to study the Congress in terms of its multifarious membership. Any study of Hindu nationalism and its relationship to 'communalism' must also discuss the role and ideas of these individual politicians. There has been ambivalence in historical writing about the relative importance of leaders, communal or otherwise, and their manipulation of religious rhetoric. The gears of communal conflict, it has been argued, were lubricated by competition over social and political resources, rather than the deliberate manipulation of religious symbols, or institutional alliances such as those that existed between the Congress and Arya Samaj.[1] It has been seen that the cloth boycotts and untouchable uplift movement of civil disobedience bore a relationship to Hindu–Muslim conflict in Agra, Banaras, Allahabad, Kanpur, Lucknow and a host of smaller towns. In these situations, both competition for space and resources and political ideologies played their part. Untouchable uplift, for example, raised questions of political representation and power, as well as the symbolic and emotional significance of a rejuvenated and unified 'Hindu community'.

Competition between communities provided the material basis for animosity by promoting political fissures and economic inequality. But this competition does not fully explain why diverse social groups were able to identify themselves as 'Hindu' in particular situations. Understanding

[1] This argument was favoured by W. W. Hunter in *The Indian Musulmans* (London, 1876) on the basis of the material and educational backwardness of north Indian Muslims. See Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, pp. 338–9. David Page discusses the communal conflict of the 1920s as a reflection of the political reforms of 1919 after which 'communal unity gave way to communal antagonism', and charts the mid-1920s riots as episodes provoked by political ambition. Page, *Prelude to Partition*, pp. 73–84.

ideas of communal homogeneity and how the reactions to these ideas created conflict, must also be related to the languages of politics that made communal and national identifications possible in the first place. In many instances, conflict could arise on the basis of the 'symbolic' significance of a political grouping, rather than on its actual relative political or economic power.[2] Whilst competition invariably provided the material reason for conflict, it did not always determine the nature of that conflict in the case of UP in the 1930s and 1940s. Hindu–Muslim antagonism could be grafted onto more complicated social and economic divisions by the methods used by leaders to mobilise political support around those divisions. This chapter will therefore examine in more detail the political languages employed by particular Congress leaders.

It has been seen that the ways in which Hindu nationalist ideologies and languages of politics affected mass activity varied according to context and locality. Moreover, it was the interplay between local, provincial and national symbols, and their dialogue with contextual and historical conditions, which served to homogenise and make more concrete the Hindu idiom in UP Congress politics. So far this has been examined in relation to linguistic and mobilisational themes, such as cloth boycott and cow protection. The diversity and spread of these symbolic themes was such that the identification of political agency was not always useful – indeed that the very problem of identification might provide evidence that these languages of politics permeated diverse arenas. However, the tension between a reforming, inclusivist and essentially 'modern' Hinduism and more communal Hindu notions, as seen in the response to uplift, also manifested itself in the political writings and activities of a set of UP Congress leaders. These were leaders who worked at multiple levels – town, district, province and nation – and spread across other ideological divides. Importantly, they demonstrated that an engagement with a Hindu idiom was not necessarily confined to the politics of the right, although its appearance was more abundant there in the mid-1920s.[3]

During civil disobedience and after, a sense of the Hindu nation, which appeared through this dialogue and mixture of political languages, was bound to an array of social and political objectives. It even appeared in the political rhetoric of socialists and those appealing to urban labour.[4]

[2] Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics*, p. 121.

[3] The political mobilisation of the 'Hindu community' in UP was associated with the activities of Madan Mohan Malaviya in this decade, a right-wing Congressman and Hindu Mahasabhaite. See Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere*, pp. 266–8.

[4] Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*, pp. 120–6. Gooptu has shown that, in the late 1920s and early 1930s in Kanpur, low-caste labourers and craftsmen at times adopted a

This appears to be inconsistent with the rise of Congress socialism in the 1930s and the reactions to the communal riots of the mid-1920s. In the 1910s and 1920s, political leaders could combine communal associations with Congress membership through participation in the Hindu Mahasabha. This was an important political arena in the context of the divided Congress in mid-1920s' UP, providing an institutional battleground between Madan Mohan Malaviya and Motilal Nehru.[5] But by the late 1930s the institutional overlap between Congress, Hindu Sabhas and the Arya Samaj in UP was much less obvious than at the beginning of the decade. In 1938 it was made impossible, on paper, to hold Congress Committee membership alongside a similar affiliation to a communal organisation.[6] In the early 1940s the Hindu Mahasabha in UP was more prominent as a critic of the 'pro-Muslim' proclivities of Congressmen than as an ally of local Congress organisations, as it had been in the 1920s and early 1930s.[7] The appearance of Veer Savarkar as president of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1937 seemed to make this institutional differentiation even clearer.[8] It certainly appeared, on the surface at least, that Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of a purely secular Congress had been realised.

However, the attempt to de-link the Congress from communal organisations can be viewed in another light. There was an assumption in UP in the late 1930s and 1940s that mobilisation on the basis of religious community occurred as an 'alternative' or in opposition to class-based mobilisation. This assumption was to some extent supported by the experience of untouchable uplift in the 1930s: a high-caste-led movement in which autonomous organisations of the low-caste poor were denied agency. But languages of politics which used a religious idiom were not confined to moderate politics or the Congress right, as has already been suggested in the last three chapters. In this sense, Nehru's remedy for 'communalism' of highlighting class as an arena for mobilisation could be counter-productive. Nehru realised that the Congress in UP had failed to overcome Muslim suspicion – a problem which he commonly explained in terms of the class basis of political activity. For Nehru, there was a polarity between class and communal consciousness which allowed him

political stance of 'kshatriya defenders of Hinduism'. The competition with Muslims for jobs encouraged the projection of the image of champions of the Hindu religion to Hindu merchant employers. This strategy also helped in the acquisition of credit.

5 Richard Gordon, 'The Hindu Mahasabha', pp. 180–91.

6 Although, as was pointed out in the introduction, this resolution still allowed Congress Committee members to retain less formal associations with communal organisations.

7 APS for January 1940.

8 Savarkar was often explicit in his condemnation of Congress's 'appeasement' of Muslims. *The Times of India* (Delhi), 29 December 1938.

to assert that 'so long as our politics are dominated by middle-class elements, we cannot do away with communalism altogether'.[9] For Nehru, this was also a tacit acceptance that particular 'middle-class' leaders continued to view politics in terms of religious communities. This acceptance was again shown in his comment on the need for Muslim mass contact, in which it was admitted 'that the Muslim masses have been largely neglected by us in recent years'.[10]

It was certainly the case that Congress leaders who continued to involved themselves with communal activities were predominantly upper-caste and broadly middle-class. Brahman and Vaishya urban-based Congress Hindus continued to adopt the tenets of Hindu mobilisation – a combination reflecting the town politics of earlier decades.[11] But the surprising corollary of Nehru's remarks was that Hindu groups associated with this form of politics were no longer necessarily conservative in their political views. Indeed, radicalism and the political exposition of class could co-exist with Hindu nationalist associations – a situation which can be seen in the cases of Balkrishna Sharma in Kanpur and of Sampurnanand in Banaras. Ostensibly 'conservative' or 'reactionary' groups could propagate a 'Hindu' idiom in a politically radical way.[12] Throughout the 1930s other Congress leaders, particularly in Agra and Kanpur, maintained radical affiliations whilst patronising or contributing to Hindu organisations and activities. The activities of Dr Jawahar Lal, Dr Rohatgi and Balkrishna Sharma in Kanpur and Krishna Dutt Paliwal and Om Prakash in Agra illustrate this tendency. At the level of provincial politics, even the socialists Sampurnanand and Sri Prakash involved themselves in activities which might have led outsiders to question their secularism. The careers and activities of Purushottam Das Tandon and Algu Rai Shastri throughout the late 1930s and 1940s were also crucial in this respect, as well as those of Mahabir Tyagi from Dehra Dun, C. B. Gupta, Pandit Deo Sharma, Dharm Deo Sharma and Swami Sevanand. In many cases the associations of these men with communal ideas, or with religious rhetoric, reflected political context. Even Nehru could be drawn into religio-political demonstrations. In order to

9 'Jawaharlal's Congress Presidential Address, Lucknow, 12 April 1936', *Indian Annual Register* vol. I (Calcutta, 1936) pp. 271–5.

10 'Jawaharlal Nehru's Statement on Muslim Mass Contacts Campaign: Allahabad, 27 April 1937', *Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore, 1937).

11 Bayly, *The Local Roots of Indian Politics*, pp. 216–20.

12 The activities of Audesh Narayan Singh, the raja of Kalakankar, being a case in point. During civil disobedience this landowner combined local-level commitments to Congress activity with Arya Samaj principles of Hindu nationalism. Francesca Orsini has also noted that linear ideological positions disappeared over the language question in the 1930s. *Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 347–57.

understand how and why these apparent inconsistencies in political ideology were able to manifest themselves, it is necessary to look closely at the pronouncements and writings of these figures and how they related to political action. Here we see that again there is an interplay and tension between political languages that espoused secular notions of the state and a tendency to locate the roots of a secular sentiment in 'Hindu' traditions.

There was another political dimension cutting across these languages of politics and ideologies in the late 1930s and 1940s. By the mid-1940s there were indications of ambivalence towards, and sometimes outright rejection of, Gandhian non-violence. Criticisms of ahimsa had bubbled below the surface of UP politics for a long time. Attachment to the more martial-nationalist style of an earlier era – of Tilak and the Bengali extremist movements – had figured in the thinking of some politicians in the 1920s and 1930s. It also manifested itself more obviously in popular politics: for example, the hero-worship of Bhagat Singh and nationalist comparisons with warrior-like figures such as Sivaji in the early 1930s.[13] But this style of politics became explicit by 1945, with increasing public denunciations of ahimsa. This was partly a consequence of the world war itself and the attendant repressive measures maintained by the Raj to secure the defence of the subcontinent.[14] Popular political activity in UP reflected this changed world, not only in the development of volunteer organisations, but by a revolution in thinking about community defence and the nation. These critiques of ahimsa clearly formed a dialogue with notions of the Hindu and secular in the thinking of UP leaders. One result was that volunteer organisations under Congress auspices were once again linked to communal bodies. Some Congress leaders were attracted to the models of discipline offered by the Mahabir Dals and later by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Muslim League volunteer bodies were set up in opposition to Congress volunteers as 'Hindus' just as they opposed the RSS. Because of these associations, Muslims could view the Congress 'Qaumi Seva Dal' as a Hindu organisation despite its secular basis.[15]

The ability of Muslim League volunteers to describe the Congress as 'communal' relied upon popular Muslim perceptions of Congressmen

[13] See 'Kanpur Enquiry Report', L/PJ/7/75 IOR. The significance of the martial aspect of Hinduism is also discussed by Gooptu, *The Urban Poor*, p. 587.

[14] Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 375–7, 381–3. Sarkar explains how the entire left of the Congress strained for the adoption of anti-war struggles right up to 1941, and that figures such as Jayaprakash Narayan spoke in terms of armed struggle.

[15] 'Congress Sewa Dal', AICC file G-8/1931 NMML. The pledge of the Seva Dal included the words: 'I shall voluntarily live and work with other members of the Dal without distinction of class, creed, race, province, nationality or colour.'

as representatives of 'Hindu' interests – a situation created by this interplay of political languages. Mushirul Hasan has pointed out that League propaganda from 1938 was highly hyperbolic.[16] Indeed, League accusations that the Congress represented Hindu Raj frequently relied on an outdated image of Hindu Mahasabha–Congress cooperation. This can be seen in Jinnah's League presidential address at Lucknow on 15 October 1937 in which he claimed that 'the Congress masquerades under the name of nationalism, whereas the Hindu Mahasabha does not mince words'.[17] However, the general lack of success of UP Muslims on the Congress ticket at elections and the continuing appeal of communal propaganda suggested that this propaganda struck a certain chord amongst important sections of the Muslim population. League representations of the Congress as 'Hindu' were effective at times of mass mobilisation, and during elections, precisely because of the political languages employed by Congressmen. These descriptions of the nation could be moulded to radical political ideas, and proved to be particularly effective in providing an ideological basis for militaristic volunteer activity. The on-going association of Congressmen in the localities of UP with 'Hindu' populism, on the basis of Congress's victory after the 1937 elections in UP was noticed by a host of British observers.[18] These must of course be balanced by an appreciation of British policy priorities to encourage the war-time League.[19] Nevertheless, the sense of 'Hindu' political victory could be expressed in radical terms (and was represented by the League in this way) because of the flexibility and subtleties of a rhetoric and political symbolism which had been taken up in diverse protests – cloth boycott, uplift and general Congress meetings. The substance of this political style, noted by the League, will be explored in the thinking and political activity of Congress leaders in Agra, Banaras, Kanpur, Allahabad and Dehra Dun.

[16] Hasan, *India's Partition*, pp. 15–26.

[17] 'Extracts from M. A. Jinnah's All India Muslim League Presidential Address Lucknow: 15 October 1937', in Aziz, *Muslims Under Congress Rule*, p. 147.

[18] Louis Stuart, 'Hindu and Muslim Tension', *The Indian Empire Review*, May 1939, pp. 189–95. Stuart commented that ordinary 'Hindus' both behaved and 'carried themselves' in a different way after the UP Congress victory of 1937; 'Minorities in India: Caste and Commune', *The Times*, 28 January 1939 – 'It is true that the majority of Congress leaders condemn the purely religious aspects of communalism; but the eradication of this weakness from Congress thinking derives mainly from a conviction of Hindu strength in other directions.' Sir William P. Barton, 'Indian Muslims reject Hindu Tyranny', *National Review*, June 1939, pp. 751–8: 'The conviction that Congress stands for Hindu rule pure and simple has broken down any feeling of confidence Muslims might otherwise have had.'

[19] Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 377–80.

Socialism and Hindu nationalism: Sampurnanand and Banaras

In the mid- and late 1930s, Congress socialists were numerically dominant in the UP organisation, but this radicalism did not significantly deflate the religious rhetoric of the 1920s and early 1930s at local levels. Neither did it attract increasing numbers of Muslims to the Congress, as was seen in the post-Independence Congress which was apparently uninterested in state interference in religious practice and was perceived as a secular shelter for religious minorities. An explanation for this apparent anomaly in Congress's political ideology can be found in the thinking and activities of key Congress leaders of the left – in particular, Sampurnanand of Banaras. The geographical setting of his politics was significant. The UP city of Banaras was one of the most important centres of Congress activism as well as Hindu revivalism and reformism in the early twentieth century. The religious and political significance of the city related to its antiquity: it was a centre of religious learning and education centuries before the time of the Buddha, and was later comparable to the medieval cities of Europe.[20] Both British orientalists and Congressmen viewed Banaras as a symbol of 'Hindu' culture and a centre of Brahmanic learning. Sir William Jones's journey to the city to consult pandits on a translation in 1784 inspired a growing personal interest in Sanskrit literature.[21] European visitors interested in the city came during earlier periods – Ralph Fitch (1584) and Jean Baptiste Tavernier (1636) marvelled at Hindu customs. The city had a different resonance for Indians: it was a centre with a tradition of 2,500 years of pilgrimage, cremation and worship. For some it represented the centre of the universe.[22]

The 'Hindu' symbolism of the city was not lost on 1920s' Hindu nationalists: in August 1923 Banaras was the setting for the revitalised Hindu Mahasabha, presided over by Madan Mohan Malaviya, who also founded the Banaras Hindu University in 1916.[23] Banaras was an important centre of Congress activity during non-cooperation and civil disobedience, particularly the latter, and was briefly home of the All-India and Provincial Congress organisations in 1932. It also accommodated a range of politico-religious organisations, including both the Sanatan Dharm and Arya Samaj. Important figures within, or associated with,

[20] Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 165, 200.
[21] Garland Cannon, *Orientalist Jones: A Biography of Sir William Jones (1746–1794)* (Bombay, 1964), pp. 125–6.
[22] Eck, *Banaras City of Light*, pp. 4, 5, 10–16.
[23] *Leader* (Allahabad), 22 August 1923.

the Congress used the Arya Samaj as a base for activity – especially after Gandhi's fasts of 1933 and 1934. Dharm Deo Shastri was one Congressman who kept up an affiliation with the local Samaj in the city, eventually being arrested at a Samaj meeting in 1933.[24] The city in rare instances had been an arena for Hindu–Muslim conflict. Communal confrontation dated back to 1809 and centred around the mosque of Aurangzeb which had been built on the ruins of the sixteenth-century Vishveshvara temple.[25] The serious riot of February 1931 was directly linked to over-enthusiasm in the picketing of Muslim cloth sellers, indicating a strong City Congress presence.[26] There was also a significant Muslim cloth-weaving industry in the city, the members of which involved themselves in some of the city's religious functions but maintained an ambivalent relationship with the Congress.[27]

By the 1930s two figures had come to dominate the city Congress organisation in Banaras – Sampurnanand and Sri Prakash.[28] The latter had championed the causes of social modernisation in the face of Hindu revivalism in the 1920s, arguing against organised sessions of 'inter-dining' between different castes by Mahasabhaites as insincere and patronising. Instead, he posited the 'secular' approach of the Congress to different castes.[29] However, Sri Prakash was not afraid to associate himself with Arya Samaj drives for social reform, and was identified by political observers with religious rhetoric in the 1930s. In April 1937 he was involved with Congress propaganda at the Kangri Gurukul during an anniversary in which the advantages of the Aryan east were compared to the corruption of the west. He urged the assembled students to defend the Congress flag and, alongside the Samaj member Satyamurti, eulogised the gurukul as a factory to produce soldiers for swaraj.[30]

Sri Prakash's reformist views on caste and social organisation could form a curious interface with movements of Hindu 'sangathan'. To some

[24] PAI 4 March 1933. [25] Eck, *Banaras, City of Light*, pp. 127–8.

[26] Note on the Benares riots, 12 February to 16 February 1931, GAD Box 70/71 file 1263/1931 UPSA.

[27] Nita Kumar, 'Work and Leisure in the Formation of Identity', in Freitag, *Culture and Power in Banaras*, pp. 156–63.

[28] Sri Prakash worked on *Leader* with Chintamani and was also associated with the Hindi daily *Aj*. He was a colleague of Narendra Dev and Sampurnanand at Kashi Vidyapith and was general secretary of the UP Provincial Congress Committee between 1928 and 1934. He was president of that body from 1934 to 1935. He was 'brought up on the lore of the ancient Aryan religion' but was also involved in the Congress Socialist Party's foundation in 1934, as well as the propagation of Hindi, and wrote *Grihasta Gita* and *Nagrik Shastra*. Sen, *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. IV (S–Z), pp. 259–60.

[29] *Leader* (Allahabad), 8 August 1923. Sri Prakash's objections were to a 'staged' inter-dining which had taken place in Meerut on 1 August 1923.

[30] PAI 3 April 1937.

extent, this was the result of a separation between the private sphere of religious observance and activity and the public sphere of politics in the minds of these leaders. But because there was a certain, albeit incomplete engagement with notions of orthodox secularism as the complete divorce of religion from the political sphere, this division between private and public could easily break down. India in the 1930s and 1940s was replete with public debate about the possible shape of a future independent state, and the extent to which it would accommodate India's religious diversity. At the same time, the secular was justified in terms of the values of cultural accommodation that appeared in the political language of a cosmopolitan and reformist Hinduism and Hindu community. The poor separation between this latter view of Hinduism and movements for communal consolidation helped, through the particular context of mid- and late 1930s' UP to transform the meaning of the politics of Prakash and men of his ilk.

The 'Janus'-faced nature of Congress nationalism[31] was also evident in a more important figure. The political thought of Sampurnanand was complicated and subtle by comparison to his contemporaries in the UP Congress but was nevertheless highly influential.[32] We see in his political writings a curious dialogue between Marxism and Hindu revivalism – a heteroglossia of notions which also related to political, temporal and spatial context. Ideas which combined Nehruvian Fabianism and modernity with the Hindu reformism of Swami Vivekananda and the Arya Samaj were the result of this prolific body of writing, spread over five decades.[33] Sampuranand self-consciously related his political identity and upbringing to Banaras. He mentioned in his autobiography how his childhood involved the enacting of scenes from the *Ramayana* and that Ramlila often took precedence over books and school work. Indeed, the only books he remembered from his childhood were Tulsi Das's *Sukha Sagar, Srimad Bhagwata* and *Devi Bhagwata*. Despite being of a Kayastha family and therefore traditionally Urdu-speaking, his father, a government servant

[31] Tom Nairn has likened nationalism to the two-headed Roman deity 'Janus' who could not help looking backwards into the past as well as forward into the future. Tom Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London, 1997), p. 67.

[32] In his edited Hindi work *Samyavadi Bigul* (Banaras, 1940), Sampurnanand provided the inspiration for the other contributors to the volume, including socialists from UP and beyond: Narendra Dev, Sri Prakash, Damodar Swarup Seth and Jaya Prakash Narain.

[33] The most important writings of Sampurnanand include *Bharat ke desi rastra* (1918); *Antarrastriy vidhan* (1924) *Samajavada* (1936), *Chidvilas* (1939), *Samyavadi Bigul (Samyavadi Sahityaki Utkrusht Pustak)* (1940), *The Individual and the State* (1940), *Aryaon ka Adi Desh* (1941), *Indian Socialism* (1961) and *The Evolution of the Hindu Pantheon* (1963).

on a moderate salary, insisted on teaching the young Sampurnanand Hindi first. Whilst at university in Allahabad it was the works of Swami Vivekananda and English translations of the *Upanishads* that drew Sampurnanand to Vedanta. From that point, he was drawn to books on yoga and toyed with the idea of joining the Radha Swami sect. In the end, Sampurnanand turned to his dada (paternal grandfather) who was a sadhu and disciple of Baba Ram Lal, a great yogi.[34]

Sampurnanand was most often associated in public life with education policy and the propagation of Hindi, something developed in his early career as a school and university teacher. This experience gave him the background eventually to become an important member of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan.[35] By the 1930s his authority within the Congress was paramount. In April 1930 he was appointed the first City Congress dictator of Banaras. As a leading member of the Congress socialists, he provided an on-going voice of dissent against Nehru's ambivalent attitude to the socialist wing, and from the mid-1930s he took an active role in organising the Congress volunteer corps. On 2 March 1938 he was appointed Education Minister in the Congress ministry in UP.[36] From this period through the 1940s and early 1950s Sampurnanand, often in alliance with Purushottam Das Tandon, persistently championed the causes of Hindi versus Urdu, Hindu social reform, Hindu cultural revivalism and Congress socialism.[37]

The ideological background to Sampurnanand's political activity can be found in some of his key political and religious writings. It is significant that there is not always a clear distinction in the political ideas expressed through his socialist writings compared with his religious or cultural works. Indeed, the inability of Sampurnanand to disconnect the two strands was central to the peculiar form of secularism which such combinations of political languages implied. This lack of separation between the political and the religious idiom was illustrative of a broader dialogic process in Congress ideology, as will be seen in the following sections. A recurrent theme in Sampurnanand's writings was the interplay of social responsibility, socialist organisation, the implementation of democracy, and the maintenance of spiritual values. Sampurnanand was interested in the relationship between the individual and the state, maintaining that the latter should always be subordinated to the fulfilment

[34] Sampurnanand, *Memories and Reflections* (Bombay, 1962), pp. 5–13.

[35] From 1922, Sampurnanand had been professor of philosophy at Kashi Vidyapith, and in 1923 had been elected to the Banaras Municipal Board as chairman of the Education Committee.

[36] Sampurnanand, *Memories and Reflections*, pp. 61–4, 76–83, 98.

[37] Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, pp. 151–60.

of individual potential.[38] On the other hand he also emphasised the importance of duty and 'dharma' over a sense of individual 'rights'. It will be seen that the ideology which enabled him to combine the primacy of individual realisation with dharmic social duty involved a commitment to religious values. These religious values derived from ethical and historical thinking concerning India and combined with the sense of social responsibility detailed in his book *Indian Socialism*.

For example, in his comments on secularism and its role within a democratic state, Sampurnanand held that a peculiar style of Indian secularism could be found in the subcontinent's own traditions. These traditions were represented in their purest forms as a Vedic golden age, in which a self-confident, organic society was reflected by 'Paramatma' – a universal ego or consciousness which could be derived from a purified Hinduism. Sampurnanand's political and religious works were inextricably linked, drawing upon Hegel, Marx and the Arya Samaj. Yet in many respects the rhetoric of Hindu origins and of a Vedic, unitary society could be related to the Hindu right, and it was here that the ambiguous stance on secularism, within the appropriate political context, could come to have quite a different meaning. Sampurnanand's writings then also resembled certain strands of overt Hindu nationalist thought, such as the organicist conceptions of Golwalkar and the emphasis on Vedic antiquity which appeared in Savarkar's writings.[39]

The root of Sampurnanand's thinking therefore lay in his combination of a particular form of Hindu ethics with a radical political position within the Congress. Since the dominant feature of Sampurnanand's politics in the context of UP was 'socialism',[40] the bases of this radicalism will be analysed first. In his book *Samaj Vad* socialist ideas were based as much upon Vedanta as on Marx himself – a fact acknowledged by the author.[41] Writing about the relationship between the individual and the state, Sampurnanand made a clear statement that the state has meaning only insofar as it is able to remove obstacles to an individual's self-realisation. This emphasis on the individual would at first glance appear to correspond to Gandhi's view of the state and, indeed, Sampurnanand suggested that any new constitution in India should

[38] This came out most clearly in *The Individual and the State*, but was also a recurring theme in *Indian Socialism*.

[39] Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement*, pp. 58–60, 77.

[40] At the beginning of 1946, the extent of Sampurnanand's socialism was illustrated by his reorganisation of the Congress Socialist Party, alongside Narendra Dev, to admit all non-Congress extremists. 'Confidential Report', Fortnightly Report for the second half of January 1946, 5 February 1946, Frampton Papers SAS.

[41] Sampurnanand, *Memories and Reflections*, pp. 85–6.

emphasise decentralisation at all levels.[42] However, it will be seen later that Sampurnanand had practical reservations about Gandhian politics. The stress on the individual over the state was rather part of a critique of Marx, in which Sampurnanand set out the parameters of his socialism. When it was stated that the individual's rights are not limited to those conceded by the state, Sampurnanand maintained that individual rights related to the primacy of a human and pan-human spiritual consciousness. In contrast, for Marx, moral values were environmentally conditioned:

> The difference between our position and that of Marx is that we believe certain moral values to be a direct and inevitable manifestation of man's innate and inalienable nature; Marx would have it that they are all products of the environment, created by the interplay of productive forces.[43]

Therefore, individual self-realisation in Sampurnanand's work related to his objections to historical materialism – 'man is not all body – his intellectual, and what is more important, his spiritual nature wants sustenance'.[44]

So what did Sampurnanand mean by man's 'innate and inalienable nature', and how did it relate to his socialist ideas? Hegel was cited as a support against Marx's historical materialism by suggesting 'that consciousness is the fundamental attribute of all that exists'. For Sampurnanand this meant that the soul must exist before the body, and that Marx's denial of the independent existence of consciousness was wrong, since consciousness can only be known by itself. However, Sampurnanand explicitly stated that he did not hold this view in a western Hegelian sense. For him, the autonomous and fundamental aspect of human consciousness related to Indian traditions, philosophy and spiritualism: 'In Indian thought, the substratum of the universe is pure consciousness.'[45] Up to this point it would be difficult to square Sampurnanand's emphasis on individual spiritual development with his socialism. However, human consciousness in the Indian traditions cited by him was simply part of a universal consciousness that manifests itself throughout the universe, and through which an individual's social and political duty or 'dharma' could operate. Sampurnanand called this universal consciousness the 'universal ego', derived from Vedic ideas and the philosophy of Sankara,[46]

[42] Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds*, pp. 236–7. For Gandhi the state was 'devalorised'. Like Sampurnanand, he believed that the only enduring basis of the state 'can be the moral calibre of the individuals who constitute it'. Therefore the best state is that which governs the least. The corollary of this was political decentralisation.

[43] Sampurnanand, *Indian Socialism* (London, 1961), pp. 8–9.

[44] Sampurnanand, *Memories and Reflections*, p. 162.

[45] Sampurnanand, *Indian Socialism*, p. 5.

[46] The philosopher Sankara represented classical Vedanta. He was a south Indian Saivite Brahman who composed extensive commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras* and the chief

represented by the word 'Paramatma'.[47] Sampurnanand's socialism, then, was based upon an understanding of a universal ego, which itself presents the moral and ethical bases of social responsibility to create the material conditions for a more egalitarian society. The combination of these two ideas – the western and the Vedantic Indian – presented a number of constraints on the Indian socialists' beliefs about political organisation and revolution. Democracy was conceded as the most appropriate modern system of political representation, but every country had to adapt a system 'best suited to its genius and traditions'. More importantly, Indian socialists could never think in terms of world revolution, since this aggressive form of political expansionism was alien to Indian traditions:

> In the heyday of their power – during the days of powerful empires like the Maurya and the Gupta – Indian rulers never sought to impose their rule on other peoples. Indian culture and religion spread far beyond the frontiers of the country but the Flag never followed the Faith and the teachings of our missionaries were never backed by the sword of any monarch.[48]

The implications of this form of Indian socialism for the political image of important Congress figures such as Sampurnanand and Sri Prakash, and for the UP Congress organisation as a whole, were far-reaching. Firstly, it encouraged a view of secularism which defended religion as a vital human pursuit, thereby locating a truly 'Indian' secularism – a form of toleration, within the Vedic past: 'Secularism, in the only sense in which it needs to be strictly enforced, has been known to India from the very beginning. Indian culture does not know of religious wars.' For Sampurnanand, secularism had been the traditional policy of the Indian state, and true Indian secularists believed that 'Irreligion, and ridicule of religious faith are perhaps among the greatest enemies of true secularism.'[49] The siting of rationalism and scientific reasoning in Indian traditions was a practice of other philosophers who appealed to the Congress in the late 1930s, as well as Hindu nationalists later in the century. Radhakrishnan wrote in 1939 that: 'Hinduism adopts a rationalist attitude in the matter of religion. It tries to study the facts of human life in

Upanishads. He considered Vedic literature to be sacred and unquestionably true and was perhaps most noted for his feat of reducing all self-contradictory passages of the Upanishads to a consistent system. This became the standard philosophy of modern intellectual Hinduism, followed by Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose and Radhakrishnan. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, pp. 330–1.

[47] Sampurnanand, *Indian Socialism*, pp. 3–7. [48] *Ibid.*, pp. 18–23.

[49] Sampurnanand, 'Congress Ideology and Programme', in *Memories and Reflections*, pp. 62–3.

a scientific spirit.'[50] But this view of the secular state has had longer-term repercussions and was a position from which it was quite easy to champion Hindu exceptionalism. The location of secularism within Hindu ideas of sarva–dharma–sambhava was a favourite pastime of those with Hindu nationalist sympathies later in the century.[51]

The implications of these combined and dialogic political languages went beyond ideological sentiment and affected political action too. The privileging of religion in society's relationship with the state provided ideological justification for the merging of Hindu religious ideas with political activity. Figures such as Sampurnanand, Sri Prakash, Tandon and Gandhi himself were blind to the communal messages intermittently attached to their actions by non-Hindus. Sampurnanand believed that 'To ignore religion – to relegate it to the background is folly. It is doubly foolish in a country like India.'[52] Consequently, Sri Prakash saw no political danger in associating himself with the Arya Samaj and the Kangri Gurukul in 1936 and 1937. Similarly, Sampurnanand was able to maintain direct contact with Hindu communal organisations in the belief that a rejuvenated Hindu society could have radical political implications. In October 1932 Sampurnanand had been involved in the organisation of a Hindu Sabha meeting to mobilise support for Gandhi's 'harijan' campaign – an activity which potentially reinforced Muslim suspicions of his Hindu nationalist inclinations.[53] An attachment to a 'Vedantic' view of the secular state was more likely to form a bridge between Congressmen who might otherwise have been ideologically divided. Whilst Sampurnanand was able to support Gandhi's harijan uplift movement, his socialist principles and relatively extreme stance on the Independence pledge led him to oppose elements of Gandhi's constructive programme. In January 1942, Sampurnanand, along with fellow socialist Jaya Prakash, objected to an addition to the pledge which suggested Congressmen should regularly spin and promote the purchase of handicrafts. Such a policy would do nothing to promote large-scale industry in India.[54]

But it was as Education Minister in 1938 and 1939 that Sumpurnanand's ideas had lasting implications for UP politics. Two themes emerge here: the implementation of the Wardha scheme and the efforts to propagate Hindi. The achievement of a socialist society in

[50] Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 21–2.

[51] Sankhdher, 'Understanding Secularism', in Sankhdher, *Secularism in India*, pp. 4–7; L. M. Singhvi, 'Secularism: Indigenous and Alien', in *ibid.*, pp. 35–87.

[52] Sampurnanand, *Memories and Reflections*, p. 165.

[53] *Leader* (Allahabad), 23 October 1932. It has already been seen in chapter 3 how the untouchable uplift movement led to a conservative Muslim reaction (on the basis of opposition to the Sarda Act) which fed directly into communal conflict in UP.

[54] Sampurnanand, *Memories and Reflections*, p. 112.

Sampurnanand's thinking implied propagation of a philosophical standard through education. He made no bones in his writing about linking educational ideals to the philosophy of Vedanta and Indian traditions. Citizens should be educated about the ideal society according to the concept of 'Virat Purusha' – the idea that all living sentient beings have a spiritual connection: 'The virat concept will have to be made the warp and woof of individual and communal life from the earliest years.' On a practical level, Sampurnanand ensured that the Wardha scheme of education – a scheme that raised Muslim hackles as being 'pro-Hindu' – was quickly entrenched. In UP in 1938, 1,300 primary schools were simultaneously converted to the scheme, allowing it to survive the resignation of the Congress ministry in the province. Elsewhere the scheme was implemented patchily and was vulnerable after 1939.[55] Muslim League propaganda depended upon objections to Congress schemes such as Wardha, and exploited fears of being steam-rollered into an educational system that ignored separate Muslim educational needs. Specific objections of the League demonstrated the seriousness of Congress's ideological position for Muslims in this respect: it was maintained that the scheme presented a one-sided view of Muslim history, giving prominence to Hindu heroes. More seriously, under the section on religious education, the League objected to the depiction of religion as 'absorbent' and 'all-inclusive' – a classic Congress exposition of Hinduism. For the League, it was not true 'that all religions meet in their essentials in perfect harmony'.[56] The possible progression from Vedantic inclusivism and an intolerant Hindu communal position was spotted here.

Sampurnanand, alongside Tandon, was directly implicated in communal controversy with Muslims over the relative merits of Hindi and Urdu as national languages.[57] In his own writings Sampurnanand acknowledged Tandon as the 'greatest protagonist' of Hindi, mentioning his coup as Speaker of the UP Assembly, when he reversed the priorities of English and Hindi in speeches. He was also openly critical of Urdu, claiming it to be 'unacceptable' and certainly 'not . . . suitable for adoption as a national language'.[58] At the end of August 1938, at the Kashi Nagri Pracharini Sabha, the Education Minister made a speech hinting at the qualitative differences between Hindi and Urdu as national languages, leading to

55 Sampurnanand, *Indian Socialism*, p. 64; *Memories and Reflections*, pp. 99–100.
56 'Report of the Committee appointed by the Council of the All-India Muslim League to examine the Wardha Scheme' in Aziz, *Muslims under Congress Rule*, pp. 185–6.
57 Orsini, *Hindi Public Sphere*, pp. 269–70, 235–6. Both Tandon and Sampurnanand vociferously aimed to enhance the political status of Hindi – in this they clashed with the 'Hindustani' camp of Congressmen in the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, including Gandhi, Nehru and Rajendra Prasad.
58 Sampurnanand, 'Our National Language', in *Memories and Reflections*, pp. 88–92.

a protracted communal controversy. He emphasised the necessity of retaining a good quota of Sanskritised Hindi in any national language, for the sake of 'the people of Maharashtra, Gujurat, Bengal and Madras'. Sampurnanand himself noted the criticisms of the Urdu press. But his speech contributed to the cumulative image creation of the UP Congress as a 'Hindu party': 'Several papers which are bitterly opposed to the Congress are today referring to Congress resolutions and they smell communalism in my words.'[59] The gravity of Sampurnanand's remarks on the language question were demonstrated by the political advantage taken by the Muslim League on the issue. In its report on Congress's Wardha education scheme, direct reference was made to Sampurnanand: 'The advocacy of the more frequent use of Sanskrit by the Minister of Education, UP and its acceptance by the Congress High Command so that it may be intelligible to people of all provinces is an example of the attitude of the Congress leaders.'[60] Sampurnanand continued to be publicly associated with this pro-Hindi bias in the language question well into the 1940s, which suggested that neither he nor his close Congress colleagues interpreted the effect of his stance as communally antagonistic.[61] At a meeting of the provincial Jamiat-ul-Ulema Working Committee in the second week of March 1945, Sampurnanand and Purushottam Das Tandon were more severely criticised for their attitude towards Urdu. The complaints were repeated a month later at a meeting at Muzaffarnagar, by Hifzul Rahman of Bijnor and Hafiz Mohammed Ibrahim.[62]

Whilst Sampurnanand was relatively unaware of the communal consequences of his political ideas, he was certainly conscious of the 'Hindu' orientation of his ideas about the nation, its culture and religious traditions. Indeed, it will be seen that he positively promoted the use of religious rhetoric in describing the nation in his writings on religion. In chapter 2 it was argued that Congress's employment of religious symbolism was often inadvertent or mainly functional and perhaps best described as a political language. Sampurnanand's explicit admission of the value of a 'Hindu' view of the nation suggested that, in some cases, illustrating the nationalist struggle with religious themes was a self-conscious ideological process. In his writings on religion, Sampurnanand's depictions of the Hindu nation were also premised on the evolution of Hinduism,

59 Sampurnanand Papers (Varanasi Regional Archives), Sampurnanand to Gandhi, 5 September 1938.
60 Aziz, *Muslims under Congress Rule*, pp. 175–90.
61 Indeed Sampurnanand made repeated attempts to draw other leading Congressmen into movements for the promotion of Hindi. Sampurnanand to Pant, 12 April 1945, Pant Papers (microfilm) NMML.
62 APS 23 March 1945; 20 April 1945.

faced with the challenges of Islam and Christianity. The resultant 'organic' 'Bharat' or 'Aryavarta' bears some resemblance to the extremist right-wing conception of the nation and the place of Hindu society within it. In these ideas too, as shown in the writings of RSS leader Golwalkar and Mahasabhaite Savarkar, there is a stress on the purity and organic whole of the Hindu nation contrasted with non-Hindu elements.

Sampurnanand traced the historical evolution of the Hindu community by identifying phases of corresponding political and spiritual weakness or strength. The differing qualitative stages of Hinduism's evolution were directly related to 'foreign' domination in the form of the infiltration of semitic religions. Bhakti doctrine was described as eminently suited to the mentality of a defeated people 'on the point of losing their national and cultural identity', since the symbolism used by bhakti prayers was self-defeating: prayers are addressed to Krishna as Ranachhar – a figure who ran away from battle. In this period Sampurnanand decried the attitude of a community of East UP Hindus who mistakenly worshipped a Muslim invader of the region. The root of this weakness in Hinduism was related to the influence of semitic religions which introduced a new idea of God as 'creator' and 'destroyer': 'the virile God of the Conqueror over-shadowed the impersonal Paramatma and the Isvara that emerged was very much an image of the God of the Hebrews, Christians and Muslims'. By comparison, the Vedic idea of the 'paramatma' – over-soul of the universe, untainted by the influences of Islam or Christianity – fitted comfortably with the concept of karma, and promoted a more self-confident Hindu society. Hence Sampurnanand noted that it was through the benevolent services of the Arya Samaj that the mistaken Hindus of East UP were persuaded to abandon their worship of the Muslim invader.[63]

Here is an exposition on the nature of the Hindu nation: an evolving, socially cohesive whole, which is at its purest and strongest whilst based on Vedic values of 'paramatma', and at its weakest, both politically and spiritually, when influenced by Islam and Christianity. Moving closer to the present, Sampurnanand noted that there was a new awakening in Hindu thought, brought about by the nationalist movement. On the one hand, he delineated a cultural renaissance, like that of the Guptas. On the other, he explained the beneficial effect of the thinking of Swami Vivekananda and the Arya Samaj in the propagation of the ideas of the Vedanta – a return to the over-soul of the universe. This view of the Hindu nation allowed Sampurnanand to applaud the use of religious rhetoric in nationalist writing and political activity. In an essay on 'Ramrajya and Socialism' he commended the importance that Gandhi's mythical

[63] Sampurnanand, *Evolution of the Hindu Pantheon* (Bombay, 1963), pp. 81–90.

symbolism had imbued in terms of understandings of the nation.[64] In his religious works he pointed out that nationalist writing was charged with religious thought and that political poems resembled Vedic mantras. The words of Nirala are quoted:

> O, player of the Vina, give us this blessing. Fill Bharata with the dear sound of Freedom, the new Mantras of immortality. Destroy all the dark bonds of the heart. O, Mother, let there flow the currents of light.[65]

Sampurnanand's concept of the Indian nation, through his emphasis on Vedic ideals, therefore blended with his writings on socialism, which premised social responsibility on 'paramatma'. The concept allows for an organic view of the nation, based in notions of Indian traditions. Indian socialists should: 'impress upon every citizen the concept of the Virat Purusha, that universal corpus in which all living things have a place, organically connected with other living things'. However, the origin of the idea of 'Virat Purusha' in Sampurnanand's thinking was a return to the philosophy of Vedanta in which a sense of the soul of the universe was unpolluted by semitic ideas of God. The nation, then, was also ideally an Aryan one. If philosophy were accorded a place in public life:

> Work will cease to be a drudgery, because it will be part of a *Yajna*, a sacred ceremony, for the transformation of this world into a true Ramrajya. The Vedas say *Krmudhvani Vishvamaryam* – make the whole world Arya. What nobler goal can be placed before anyone?[66]

Sampurnanand's writings on Hindu religion clearly related to ideas about political mobilisation. The important strands in his writings were therefore not the theological dimensions of Vedanta but its meaning as a cultural and political resource. This agenda of the spiritual interconnection between all living things was expressed explicitly in relation to national identity. In *Indian Socialism* the overlap of modern social organisation and Vedanta was considered to be exceptional to India, which could never follow the example of western socialism in its drive for world revolution. This organicist conception of the nation is an integral part of the political thinking of overt Hindu nationalists, both in present-day India and in the 1930s and 1940s. Golwalkar, supremo of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, also set state power against the relative importance of social cohesion, and claimed that the Indian body politic was characterised by organic 'harmony'. The ideal state is one where each

64 Sampurnanand, 'Ramrajya aur Samajvadi', in *Samyavadi Bigul*, pp. 64–71.
65 Sampurnanand, *Evolution of the Hindu Pantheon*, pp. 99–100.
66 Sampurnanand, *Indian Socialism*, p. 23; 'A Philosophy of Life', in *Memories and Reflections*, p. 172.

'individual has realised his oneness with others in society and is imbued with a spirit of sacrifice' and each of these individuals could be symbolised by cells within an organic body.[67] In a more direct resemblance with the thinking of Sampurnanand, Savarkar, alongside Golwalkar, crystallised the meaning of 'Hindutva' by setting up the idea of a 'Vedic golden age' in which Hindu society was an organic whole.[68] Although Savarkar and Golwalkar arrived at a totalitarian and racially motivated concept of the state and the nation, the imagery, traditions and philosophy used to do so corresponded to the writings of Sampurnanand. This is not to argue that Sampurnanand drew similar conclusions, and derived the same practical applications as overt Hindu communalists for his ideology of the state, society and the body politic. It would be facile to claim that Hindu communal organisation along the lines of the RSS could ever have figured in the political programme of the UP socialist. On the other hand, it can be seen that Sampurnanand's brand of Hindu revivalism probably had a relatively lasting effect on the communal politics of UP. This was precisely because its mixture of political languages linked his ideas to the thinking of Gandhi, through the religious rhetoric of Congressmen in the 1930s and 1940s, and to the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha. Moreover, Sampurnanand's public image was as a Congress socialist. His outspoken views on Urdu, his veiled admiration for the ideals of the Arya Samaj and Hindu Sabhas, and his deep-rooted sense of the organic whole of the Hindu people and Hindu nation all suggested that Congress radicalism could co-exist with precisely those elements of a 'Hindu' politics outlined by Muslim League propaganda. These characteristics were important for UP as a whole. In contrast to many of the political figures outlined so far, Sampurnanand's position was essentially provincial and not confined to a particular city or district by the late 1930s.

Much of the writing about socialism in north India has focused upon aspects of left-wing ideology that allow parallels to be drawn with European and Chinese communism.[69] The sympathies of Nehru for state socialism, and the overt radicalism of figures like Jaya Prakash Narain, have tended to saturate theories of the left in India. Although there is no obvious contradiction between a religious politics and socialism (and such a combination has occurred in other contexts), political analyses of the Congress

[67] Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, pp. 60, 534, cited in Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, p. 60.

[68] Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, p. 77.

[69] For example, Bimal Prasad states that throughout the period of 1936–9 a strong support for the Soviet Union remained implicit in the policy of the Congress. Bimal Prasad, 'Socialism and Foreign Policy Thinking, 1919–1939', in B. R. Nanda, ed., *Socialism in India*, (Delhi, 1972), p. 156.

organisation have tended to set up a polarity of ideological positions, encouraging the siting of Nehruvian socialists on the left and Gandhians on the right of the Congress organisation.[70] In the case of UP there was no such clear-cut ideological polarity in the context of communal politics. The political thought of Sampurnanand suggests that the incorporation of a high-caste, reformist form of Hindu rhetoric in describing the nation could cut across other ideological differences and combine with other political languages. Nehru certainly held more obviously secular views about the basis of nationalism.[71] But this should not colour our entire view of the Congress left. Sampurnanand was able to associate with the socialist Narendra Dev, as well as the conservative Madan Mohan Malaviya, in writing about the Indian nation. His ideas about the state corresponded with Gandhi's, but his view of the organic nature of society, based upon a Vedic ideal, was also close to Golwalkar. There was no clear distinction between his personal or private views about Hinduism and his sense of its applicability to the integrity of India: the combination of Hinduism with public service to the nation was shown in his book *Ganesha*. Bhagwan Das commented on the book that 'it will help on their emancipation from the mental slavery to blind unreasoning Superstition, which is the definite cause of our other manifold bondages too'.[72] Sampurnanand's politics exemplified the ways in which an institution like the Congress, and in a context such as UP, was able to or was obliged to promote a political culture that tolerated such a cross-section of ideologies. Consequently, his was not the only example of a cross-section of such political languages, as will be seen in the following sections of this chapter.

The connections between private philosophy and public life in these political writings meant that the ideas of Sampurnanand and those sharing his ideals in UP could be translated into political action. Sampurnanand himself recognised this in the religious rhetoric of twentieth-century Indian nationalism. Describing the nation in 'Hindu' terms was not simply a political strategy, but was related to more deep-seated views about the Indian people. Sampurnanand and Purushottam Das Tandon, both leading figures in the Congress, espoused these ideas well into the late 1940s and 1950s. The former became Chief Minister of UP between

[70] P. C. Joshi, 'Nehru and Socialism in India, 1919–1939', in Nanda, *Socialism in India*, pp. 128–9. Orsini provides an exception to this, highlighting the sense of Congressmen as both conservative Hindus and 'mahapurusha' – approachable by the people. *Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 287.

[71] Comments of Jawaharlal Nehru on the Kanpur Enquiry Report, AICC file 62/1931 NMML. Nehru wrote that too much stress had been laid on the 'moral and religious' aspects of 'Indian civilisation', as compared with the 'economic and political' basis of western civilisation.

[72] Bhagwan Das to Sampurnanand, 9 March 1945, Sampurnanand Papers NAI.

1954 and 1960 and vociferously championed the adoption of Hindi versus Urdu as a national language throughout this period.[73] Tandon, another Congress socialist, set up an institution for 'Hindu sangathan' – the Hind Raksh Dal – in the late 1940s, an episode which will be described in a later section. UP was home to a breed of Congress radicals who also flirted with Hindu nationalism. The implications for Congress leaders in other cities, and for the political identity of UP Muslims, in the 1930s and 1940s were far-reaching.

Flirtations with Hindu nationalism: Congress leaders in Kanpur

It is no accident that the three major centres of Hindu–Muslim tension in UP during civil disobedience, Agra, Kanpur and Banaras, also featured institutions of Hindu communal organisations. Many of these had developed relationships with Congress, or contained Congress leaderships with sympathies for the Arya Samaj or Hindu Sabhas. The mixture of political languages in Congress politics sometimes even facilitated the articulation of a more directly communal sense of Hindu identity. This sense of Hindu identity could be related to the more ambiguous ideologies of Sampurnanand. This was particularly the case in Kanpur, where politics came to be interpreted in a communal way in municipal politics, as well as through the manoeuvres of Congressmen. In Agra the connections were less obvious, but tension between religious communities quickly developed around Congress campaigns like the cloth boycott. In Banaras, with the presence of the Hindu University and the strong Hindi movement, religio-political organisations had always enjoyed a strong, if fluctuating presence. In Kanpur the linkages between Congress and Hindu institutions were more widespread. Dr Jawahar Lal Rohatgi, G. G. Jog, Balkrishna Sharma, Ram Swarup, Narayan Prasad Arora and Lala Ram Ratan Gupta were figures of interest in this respect. Some lesser Congress figures, who also took part in municipal politics, retained affiliations with the Hindu Sabha in the early 1930s.

Although Kanpur was the centre of most recurrent religious controversy in UP, Agra was also a city that, like Banaras, fostered ideological links between Congress socialism and the Arya Samaj. On 12 March 1930, at a meeting attended by 500 people in Agra, Sri Krishna Dutt Paliwal[74] responded to comments about the apparent non-involvement

[73] Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, p. 151.

[74] Paliwal was president of the Kanpur City Congress Committee and the Mazdur Sabha between 1922 and 1923. He was a member of the All-India Congress Committee from 1922. He edited *Pratap*, the Hindi national weekly, and was chief editor of *Sainik* (Agra)

of Muslims in civil disobedience by claiming that it mattered very little whether or not Muslims joined, since swaraj could be obtained by the Hindus alone. Shortly before his arrest for making salt in Agra on 6 April, he had made a pronouncement that the 'fight' against the government was a purely religious one. Later, in April 1935, Paliwal involved himself with the Arya Samaj, making political speeches in the Hathras Samaj hall at the beginning of the month. Of equal significance were the activities of Om Prakash, Agra district Congress President in May 1931. By November 1934 he was president of a newly formed Arya Kumar Sabha formed in Saharanpur. Another Agra-based Congress leader, Kedar Nath, was at the forefront of the organisation of a Hindu Phul Dol procession in April 1939, which fed Muslim resentment of the Congress in the city.[75]

Urban UP, then, provided a particularly important environment for the politics of this style of leader, as well as mobilisation through religious structures as was seen in chapter 2. To some extent there was a contrast in the nature of how this form of politics appeared on the basis of size and urban history. Kanpur was and still is the largest and most industrialised city of UP, with a large section of the population engaged in manufacturing, and here communal mobilisation appears to have reflected the particular problems of the city. In the 1930s and 1940s there was a significant Muslim population in the weaving and leather-tanning industries.[76] The city accommodated an array of political organisations, and there had been a strong presence of communal institutions, both Hindu and Muslim, from the 1910s and 1920s: both Tanzeem and shuddhi, the latter under the auspices of the Arya Samaj, had been a feature of city politics in the late 1920s. In that decade, too, there were strong institutions of low-caste communities, such as the Adi-Hindu Sabhas, predominantly representing the Chamars.[77]

As Nandini Gooptu and Gyan Pandey have noted, there was an ongoing overlap between the Hindu Sabha and Congress affiliation in Kanpur in the 1930s and 1940s.[78] In Pandey's work much of this evidence is based around the events of the Kanpur riot, in which witness statements pointed to the covert relationship between local bodies.[79] Nandini

from 1925. He was dictator of the UP Congress Committee in 1933. W. P. Kabadi, ed., *India's Who's Who 1937–1938* (Bombay, 1937), p. 535.

75 PAI 5 April 1930; 10 November 1934; 15 April 1939.

76 Chitra Joshi, 'Bonds of Community, Ties of Religion: Kanpur Textile Workers in the Early Twentieth Century', *Indian Social and Economic History Review* 22, 2 (1985), pp. 254–6.

77 Gooptu, *The Politics of the Urban Poor*, pp. 154–60.

78 *Ibid.*, pp. 192–3; Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, pp. 128–34.

79 'Evidence of Dr. Murari Lal', in Barrier, *The Roots of Communal Politics*, pp. 234–48, 462–78. The objections of Zafarul Mulk in the report of the Congress Enquiry Committee

Gooptu also ties the Hindu nationalist element of Kanpur's politics to factional divisions in the municipality. Well into the 1940s, municipal politics in Kanpur was frequently subverted to communal alliances with, for example, a 'Hindu party' forming in 1941 to block the career of a Muslim Executive Officer in the city.[80] Struggles for the control of the city's resources and patronage frequently developed along the lines of religious community. This must be borne in mind when looking at the activities of Kanpur Congress leaders in this period – especially those who appeared to adopt the rhetorical style of the Hindu Sabhas and Arya Samaj. To some extent we will see how this norm of political expression helps to explain the enthusiastic response here in 1940 to the Muslim League's Lahore Resolution.[81]

The evidence surrounding the Kanpur Hindu–Muslim riot of 1931 has already been cited. But the associations between Congressmen and Hindu nationalism went beyond the riot, both in terms of chronology and the popular success of the Muslim League in the city. There is an indication here that the rhetoric of Congressmen reflected the overlapping political languages about Hinduism expressed by Sampurnanand. The religious imagery used by Kanpur leaders was seen in chapter 2, especially that of Balkrishna Sharma,[82] G. G. Jog and Narayan Prasad Arora. Ram Swarup also made references to the communal dimension of the cloth boycotts. In a speech on 15 March 1931, he mentioned that there would inevitably be a fight between 'us' and Muslims who were cooperating with the government. Another important Congress figure from Kanpur who played a large part in the campaigns of cloth boycott allied himself more explicitly with Hindu communal institutions. Dr Jawahar Lal Rohatgi was an important presence at the Ajmer session of the Hindu Mahasabha, which voiced its opposition to the pro-Muslim

into the Kanpur riots point to these kinds of relationships. He claimed that the number of Kanpur Congressmen above Hindu–Muslim feeling was microscopic – not more that two or three of them – and 'the rest are all defensive communalists'.

80 *The Citizen Weekly* (Kanpur), 11 October 1941; 12 July 1941.

81 *Ibid.*, 19 May 1941.

82 Balkrishna Sharma was born into a lower-middle-class family in Gwalior state. During his education in Shajapur he became interested in the Arya Samaj. He was incarcerated six times between 1920 and 1947. He was a Hindi poet, and at different times edited *Pratap*. From the 1930s to the 1950s Sharma was a forceful advocate of Hindi, acting as president of the Kashi, Basti and Farrukhabad UP Hindi Sahitya Sammelan between 1930 and 1931 and was a member of the Kanpur branch of the Nagari Pracharini Sabha. He was a follower of Tandon's 'philosophy of action', becoming a socialist in his thinking between 1932 and 1934. Sen, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. IV (S–Z), pp. 149–52. At the start of Gandhi's salt march, Sharma had declared that Gandhi was advancing towards the sea 'to destroy this satanic government', and that it had now become the religious duty of every Indian to commit sedition.

content of the Communal Award on 16 October 1933. The session resolved that the efforts to maintain Hindu–Muslim unity should be given up and replaced by Hindu sangathan.[83] Whilst in most cities of UP the relationship between Congress and communal organisations were usually denied, in Kanpur there did not appear to be any attempt to conceal such connections.

The associations of Kanpur Congressmen with the Hindu Sabha and Arya Samaj directly contributed to Congress–Muslim League bitterness and, by extension, communal conflict in the city in 1939. At the beginning of February 1939 the City Muslim League was taking advantage of resentment against Hindu Barat music near the sensitive Bansmandi mosque.[84] On 4 February a private meeting of the Working Committee of the League appointed a 'sub-committee' to protect Muslim interests in this case.[85] However, the Kapra Committee and Hindu Sabha both advocated 'defence' of Hindu rights to perform Barat music through the city. Congress presence in these bodies substantiated League claims of a 'Hindu-dominated' Congress. The Congress's celebration of 'Independence Day' so soon after the Mahasabha's Hyderabad agitation (which set out the supposed tyranny of the Muslim ruler of this Indian state over his Hindu population) also allowed League supporters to link the two organisations.[86] However, it was the known active association between Congressmen and institutions to represent 'Hindu' interests which really fired Muslim League popularity in the city. In an assessment of the 1939 riot situation, Balkrishna Sharma, representing the City Congress Committee, made a public assertion that Muslim claims regarding the Bansmandi mosque were 'entirely preposterous'.[87] Sharma also attended all the 'Hindu' meetings of protest. Rohatgi appeared as a member of the Hindu deputation to the District Collector on 10 February.[88] Even more importantly, a prominent ex-member of the Congress Committee, Lala Ram Ratan Gupta, now appeared as an active member on the 'Hindu Sangh' Working Committee.[89] This erstwhile Congress leader joined G. G. Jog to patrol areas of the city affected by the riots. The influence of

83 PAI 12 April, 19 July 1930; 28 February, 21 March 1931; 28 October 1933.

84 The Bansmandi mosque had been a centre of rioting in the city in 1931, and there had been an on-going quarrel about whether or not music could be played in front of it at any time, not just during prayers.

85 H. C. Mitchell, Confidential Diary, 25 February 1939, Mitchell Papers MSS.EUR. F.255/5 IOR.

86 Report of the District Magistrate, Kanpur, 14 March 1939, Mitchell Papers MSS.EUR.F.255/5 IOR.

87 *The Pioneer* (Lucknow), 9 February 1939.

88 *Ibid.*, 12 February 1939.

89 *The Statesman* (Delhi), 1 March 1939.

these political figures in communal associations had a depressing effect on other groups in the city. During the riot, the students of Prithvinath School clashed over the issue of whether to hoist Congress or Muslim League flags.[90] Muslim shopkeepers trading on AB and Meston Road told the Kanpur Commissioner that they were awaiting Muslim League instructions on whether or not to open their shops.[91]

In a comparison between the two major riots of the 1930s in Kanpur, an important question is how party associations entirely degenerated into 'religious conflict'. In 1931 it was possible to make connections between elements of Hindu communal activity from the 1920s and the activities of the Congress: accusations were made concerning the personnel of the Congress, and there were indications that Muslim shops were picketed especially rigorously during the boycotts.[92] However, by 1939 the juxtaposition of political party with community had become a feature of political life at many levels in Kanpur: even school children effortlessly related political affiliation to religious community. It was even more widely assumed that Congress was 'Hindu-dominated' than in 1931. Yet the mid-1930s in UP had apparently seen a growing awareness within the UP Congress machinery of the damage wrought by communal politics. According to Pandey, it is possible for the historian to identify by this period a new 'pure nationalism' which was highly sensitive to the concept of 'communalism'.[93] This was not necessarily linked to the increasing importance of the left in the UP Congress. As the ideas of Sampurnanand suggest, the alignment of 'socialism' with non-communal secularism is an over-simplification. The Muslim League's communalised political appeal after 1937 must of course be taken into account. It is also arguable that Kanpur city presented a unique situation which hardly reflected the province as a whole.[94] Despite these qualifications, key figures associated with the Congress in Agra, Banaras and Kanpur, regardless of other political affiliations, were able to align themselves with older movements of religious mobilisation. These older or alternative notions which more clearly juxtaposed religious community with national identity were given a space, or were privileged in political discourse, as a result of the interconnected set of meanings that could be derived from Congress's notion of the 'Hindu'. The political thought and action of the Kanpur leaders, like those of Sampurnanand, could easily be interpreted

90 *The Pioneer* (Lucknow), 10 February 1939.
91 *The Statesman* (Delhi), 15 February 1939.
92 'Circular to PCCs', 16 July 1931, AICC file G8/1931 NMML.
93 See introduction, pp. 14–15.
94 *The Citizen Weekly* (Kanpur), 5 April 1941. On Jinnah's visit to Kanpur in April 1941, Muslim enthusiasm in Kanpur was described as 'unparalleled'.

as a 'Hindu' politics because they made no clear separation between a secular political sphere and the religious. This is illustrated by the assumption that Bakrishna Sharma should feel responsible to the 'Hindu' side of the communal quarrel in 1939, and present himself at meetings of the Kanpur Hindu Sangh. More important Congressmen in the provincial arena demonstrated a similar tendency, as will be seen in the next section.

The examples of Agra, Banaras and Kanpur show how the Congress still operated as an umbrella organisation within which religious mobilisation and radical anti-colonialism could be reconciled. This affected the nature of popular politics and relations between religious communities, despite the apparent overall ideological shift of the UP Congress towards socialism. The relationship between languages of religious mobilisation and secularism was subtle and complicated. Although 'communalism' was considered to be anathema to secularists, the theoretical construction of the nation, using invented notions of Hindu religion and culture, still affected those who vehemently opposed communal divisions. The writings, speeches and activities of Sampurnanand illustrate this apparent paradox most clearly. Yet it was concealed by a curious blindness. The Education Minister was of course naturally distressed and disgusted by the Hindu–Muslim rioting in Banaras in 1939. Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi was idolised as a great figure representative of communal harmony, yet he was also heard to use religious rhetoric in his speeches. The effect of this reconciliation between languages of religious mobilisation and socialism could be highly pervasive. It was a significant and sometimes dangerous combination precisely because its appearance was ambiguous, and, in the manner of a long-standing prejudice, could lie dormant within both institutions and individuals.

From radicalism to militarism: Algu Rai Shastri, Mahabir Tyagi and Purushottam Das Tandon

As war threatened in Europe from the late 1930s, Congress attempts to create mass movements appeared to shift away from Gandhian principles of ahimsa towards other forms of mass control. Volunteer movements became increasingly militaristic in their orientation, with training camps for 'officers' and the proliferation of organisations for physical culture in educational institutions.[95] The volunteer movements themselves will be analysed in more detail in the next section. Most importantly,

[95] *General Report on the Administration of the United Provinces, 1939* (Allahabad, 1941).

notions of national defence appeared as common themes in the writing and speeches of leaders associated with volunteer activity. By extension, national defence often led to the rearticulation of ideas of community defence. The need to talk about and be active in volunteer movements, in the context of an empire at war, affected the ways in which the Hindu community was imagined in the 1940s. This occurred in terms of the language of militarism and actual volunteer organisation. It was especially evident in relation to three important leaders within the Congress. Two of them – Algu Rai Shastri and Mahabir Tyagi – related their socialism to the reforms of the Arya Samaj. Purushottam Das Tandon, another socialist, moved more definitely towards militarism, in opposition to Gandhianism, using a 'Hindu' view of the nation comparable to that expressed by Sampurnanand. Like Sampurnanand, Tandon also strongly advocated Hindi, in a manner that implied communal prejudice to those outside the Congress. Importantly, like other Congress leaders, Tyagi, Shastri and Tandon had no conception that their employment of religious rhetoric and links with communal institutions might have any connection to communal conflict.

The base of Algu Rai Shastri's activity was Meerut district – already an important centre of Arya Samaj activism and significant for that institution as the home of the Gurukul Daurli. As UP responded to Gandhi's renewal of the 'harijan' question, Shastri found himself at the forefront of the 'untouchable uplift' in Meerut, arguing on the basis of socialist principles. In December 1933 he made a speech at Saharanpur, as secretary of the All-India Achhutudhar (untouchable uplift) Committee, highlighting the principles of Congress socialism as a means to enhance the social position of 'depressed classes'.[96] However, unlike Nehru, Algu Rai Shastri saw absolutely no discrepancy between this seemingly secular political ideology and involvement with politico-religious movements like the Arya Samaj. At the beginning of October 1934 he was elected vice-secretary of the city Arya Samaj in Meerut. By the end of the year intelligence reports singled out Shastri for special attention because of his continual dissemination of socialist leaflet propaganda.[97] In 1935 his Samaj-related activities accelerated. He appeared as a prominent speaker at the anniversary of the Gurukul Daurli in Meerut on 7 February. Here he addressed a meeting of untouchables at Behsuma in the district on the importance of living cleanly. Shastri later moved to a more obviously 'Hindu' standpoint on issues of political importance. At a meeting in Azamgarh in August 1939, Shastri pointedly ridiculed Muslims for their stance over the question of

[96] *Leader* (Allahabad), 22 December 1933.
[97] PAI 6 October 1934; 24 November 1934.

music before mosques. By the mid-1940s Algu Rai Shastri was involved in training volunteers for the Congress Rashtriya Dal, touring Azamgarh district for purposes of recruitment in August 1945.[98] By January 1946 he had fully converted from satyagraha to the advocacy of physical organisation, making a speech in Azamgarh district which explicitly condemned non-violence as a viable political principle.[99]

Mahabir Tyagi had been a leading Congressman since the days of non-cooperation.[100] Like Algu Rai Shastri he retained close associations with the Arya Samaj in the mid-1930s, and eventually leaned towards volunteer movement militarism as a solution to Congress organisation. On 2 and 3 April 1935 he appeared at the forefront of Arya Samaj meetings in Dehra Dun, disseminating Congress propaganda. As early as August 1935 he was appointed officer in command of UP volunteers.[101] In the lead-up to the 1937 elections, Tyagi attempted to mobilise the resources of the Arya Samaj in support of the Congress: an embarrassed Nehru was received by Tyagi in Dehra Dun Arya Samaj temple in July 1936, whilst on a political tour.[102] By 1940, Tyagi had become a leading light on the Provincial Congress Volunteer Board, in charge of producing a standard book of regulations for the Qaumi Seva Dal volunteers.[103] However, he never abandoned his taste for the Arya Samaj and viewed it as an organisation that could strengthen the Congress. At a meeting of the Arya Samaj in Dehra Dun between 26 and 30 December 1942, Tyagi appealed for the consolidation of the Arya Samaj within the Congress[104] – a similar call to that made by the extremist Swami Satya Dev in the mid-1930s, highlighting the similarities between the two organisations.

But perhaps the most significant leader of the Congress volunteer movements was Purushottam Das Tandon. Tandon took an initial interest in the Congress in 1906, and was in charge of the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan from its inception in 1910. As secretary of the Arya Samaj Punjab National Bank between 1925 and 1929, he became a member of Lajpat Rai's Servants of the People Society, and president from 1928. From the beginning of civil disobedience, he was president of the

[98] This also included work for the Kisan Sabhas. 'Confidential Report', Fortnightly Report for the first half of November 1945, 20 November 1945, Frampton Papers SAS.
[99] APS 16 August 1945; 25 January 1946.
[100] Mahabir Tyagi, *Meri Kaun Sunega: Rashriy aur Samajik jivan ke kuch rochak sansmaran* (Delhi, 1963), Ker Papers MSS.EUR.D.1059 IOR. Tyagi had been a member of the All-India Congress Committee since 1927. From 1931 he became the Congress dictator of the district, forming part of a triumvirate which in 1936 attempted to wrest control of the municipal board. By 1946 he had been jailed eleven times.
[101] 'PCC Affairs: organisation of Congress Volunteers', AICC file P-20/1934 NMML.
[102] PAI 20 April, 10 August 1935; 18 July 1936.
[103] 'Qaumi Seva Dal', 1940–1, AICC file G-6 (Pt.4)/1940; file G-5 (Pt.2)/1941 NMML.
[104] APS 2 January 1942.

Allahabad District Congress Committee. Tandon's political career in UP from 1930 like that of Sampurnanand, appeared to be a combination of socialism with selected elements of Hindu revivalism.[105] His socialism was consistent with an attachment to a personally imagined idea of the 'Hindu nation'. Indeed, for Tandon, the two were mutually supporting. In his analysis, the breadth of Hinduism as a system of thought was such that even extreme political theories could be related to it. In an essay written in September 1930 Tandon revealed this compatibility of socialism with a sense of 'Hindu' political community and organisation. From the beginning of civil disobedience, he advocated a broad-based movement, but entirely supported the idea of using religion to mobilise it: 'The whole atmosphere will have to be changed by strenuous real work amongst the masses in a manner that will appeal to their imagination.'[106] In May 1930, as we have already seen, Tandon's way of appealing to the imagination could involve the use of religious ritual. Efforts were made to persuade audiences to make a prayer to the sacred Ganga and not to wear foreign cloth.[107] Tandon's nationalism was explicitly cultural in shape and Hindi as well as Hindu religion were implicitly seen as the basis of the nation. Language debates were represented in an adversarial way by the Allahabad leader, in the draft of a speech from 1930: 'Now it seems to me that one of the deplorable effects of English rule is the hypnotic influence which the English language is exercising over us . . . sapping at the very foundations of our thought and culture.'[108] English influences were not only sapping Indian culture in a psychological or intellectual sense. They were also thought to be disrupting the integrity of Hindu society. Writing on the subject of untouchable uplift, Tandon remarked: 'Not only government officials but some of yourselves in their pay will tell you that you should regard yourselves as a class separate from the Hindus.' Tandon concluded by writing that the 'thinking' part of the country was making great efforts to obviate the distinctions between the 'upper and lower classes' and that 'the Congress, the Hindu Sabha, the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj are working to remove the distinctions.'[109] Here again, we see the movement for social reform being presented as a responsibility

[105] Francesca Orsini suggests that Tandon subscribed to the view of the politician as 'renouncer' and was called the 'Gandhi of UP'. *Hindi Public Sphere*, pp. 347–8. However, he differed sharply from Gandhi over 'ahimsa', as will be seen in the following section.

[106] 'Note on National Independence and the Problem of Languages', Tandon Papers, file 141/1930 NAI.

[107] See chapter 3, p. 103.

[108] 'Note on National Independence through mutual good will and understanding among different castes, classes and communities', p. 2, Tandon Papers, file 141/1930 NAI.

[109] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

of high-caste institutions, rather than an emphasis on low-caste identity and agency in the assertion of political rights.

By the early 1940s Tandon, like Shastri and Tyagi, was occupied with volunteer movement organisation, loosely linked with Hindu communal organisation. The move towards militarism, away from Gandhism, reached its peak in 1947 with Tandon's organisation of the Hind Rakshak Dal (Defence of India Party). At first, the interest in volunteer organisation grew out of more general Congress-related activities: in December 1939, Tandon attended the opening ceremony of the Allahabad Qaumi Sena camp – an organisation which grew by roughly 30 per cent between June 1939 and July 1940.[110] On 6 July 1940 he met with Krishna Kant Malaviya to discuss the need to establish a 'National Defence force'. On 5 November, at Allahabad University, Tandon tried to persuade students to follow the example of German students in their admiration of the Führer. The appeal reportedly had a particular effect on the Hindu students of the university.[111] Volunteer militancy was combined with advocacy of another traditional concern of Hindu revivalists. Throughout the 1940s Tandon also maintained a keen interest in the promotion of Hindi as a national language. It has already been seen in the last section how this ardent support of Hindi allowed him to be associated with Muslim criticisms of Sampurnanand in 1938. In May 1945 he was again collecting funds for the construction of a Hindi Sahitya Sammelan Bhavan in Jaipur, having collected Rs.80,000 by the end of the month.[112] In the spring of 1945 he was again building on his interest in volunteer activity.[113] By June he was planning to start a training camp for physical exercise in Allahabad.[114] On 15 August Tandon had organised for Gopi Nath Srivastava to commence a camp for the training of Congress Raksha Dal volunteers in Allahabad. In September the camp was training with weapons and offering vocal opposition to Gandhi's policy of 'appeasement'. By December

110 A new feature of volunteer activity was the greater use of drills and military discipline. 'The Volunteer Movement in India – Intelligence Bureau Information', 23 August 1940, L/PJ/8/678 Coll. 117-C-81 IOR.

111 This echoed the approach of Swami Satyanand in the early 1930s. See chapter 4, p. 149. Satyanand had made speeches at the Kangri Gurukul exhorting students to serve the 'motherland'. APS 13 November 1940.

112 APS 11 May 1945; 25 May 1945. At the Provincial Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Allahabad on 2 April 1945, Sampurnanand criticised the pro-Urdu policy of All-India Radio. 'Confidential Report', Fortnightly Report for the first half of April 1945, 19 April 1945, Frampton Papers SAS.

113 On 2 April 1945, Tandon addressed the Kangri Gurukul, proclaiming his opposition to non-violence. 'Confidential Report', Fortnightly Report for the first half of April 1945, 19 April 1945, Frampton Papers SAS.

114 Fortnightly Report for the first half of July, 20 July 1945, *Ibid.*

1945 Tandon had also founded another training camp for Congress volunteers at Baraon, and at the end of February 1946 he had travelled to Rae Bareli with the purpose of providing military training for youths.[115]

Tandon's advocacy of military organisation and physical culture demonstrated how a new set of political languages about the Hindu community had come to play a part in UP in the 1940s. Firstly, Tandon and his followers rejected the applicability of Gandhian ahimsa to the freedom struggle. Yet, curiously, quite similar religious sources, such as the *Bhagavad Gita* and the idea of 'Ram Raj', were used to create this new language of militancy. Discipline and organisation could be best achieved in these years of world conflict by the enhancement of physical fitness and the establishment of a corps of front-line soldiers, prepared for any eventuality in the progress towards political freedom.[116] Secondly, emerging from this new militarism was a fresh emphasis on the consolidation of Hindus as a national community. Militarism could form a dialogue with interpretations of 'Hindu culture', just as non-violence and toleration had done.

Tandon's Hind Rakshak Dal of June 1947 galvanised this new sense of Hindu community, and a frustration with the apparent Congress appeasement of Muslims. This organisation was short-lived and never successful as a political alternative to Congress or Congress volunteer activity. Nevertheless, it received quite widespread support in 1947 compared to similar volunteer organisations, and created a stir in Congress circles and the nationalist press. In the responses to Tandon's proposals for the Hind Rakshak Dal, the influence of Tilak's 'philosophy of action' is clear. One T. S. Sharma of Kanpur wrote to Tandon to support his scheme, with the prayer: 'May God guide the man in authority not to place any obstacles in the way so that even belated steps can be taken to prevent the threatened extinction of the Hindu race.'[117] Local Congress Committees in UP, as well as individuals, wrote to subscribe to the idea of the militaristic protection of the Hindu community. One letter from the Bareilly Town Congress Committee asked for the Bareilly 'Swang Sewak Samiti' to be allied with the Rakshak Dal. The Congress

[115] APS 1 June, 24 August, 28 December 1945; 1 March 1946 On 16 January 1946 Tandon had also addressed the students of Banaras Hindu University. In his speech he declared that non-violence had proved to be ineffective for freedom and advocated bloodshed. Fortnightly Report for the second half of January 1946, 5 February 1946, Frampton Papers SAS.

[116] Intelligence noted that volunteer activity increased in intensity following the capitulation of France to Germany in 1940. Greater militarism, in its turn, contributed to communal conflict: 'Report covering the first half of 1940', L/PJ/8/678 Coll. 117-C-81 IOR. This theme will be explored in more detail in the next section and in chapter 7.

[117] T. S. Sharma to Tandon, 22 June 1947, Tandon Papers, file 313 NAI.

Committee of Mathura and the 'Students Congress Corps' also sent their support.[118]

A large number of educational institutions as well as educationalists were enthusiastic, including the Hapur Agricultural College and the D. S. High School in Aligarh. There was even a declaration of support from one P. Parthasavathy, a member of the Andhra Socialist Party, who declared that 'Muslim nationalism is rising. We must guard against it.' Kalyan Chand Mohilay, secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha and resident of Allahabad, wrote to Tandon suggesting a more widespread introduction of military training for young men. One RSS man, Bhaskeranand, heavily criticised Gandhi for the carnage of Partition and suggested the setting-up of a shadow cabinet which would include the RSS Guruji, Dr B. S. Moonje, Tandon and Acharya J. B. Kripalani.[119] For many Hind Rakshak Dal supporters, military organisation was viewed as an integral part of 'Hindu culture' itself. One Kishan Lal Agarwala of Kanpur wrote to Tandon in July 1947 in criticism of Gandhian ahimsa: 'I feel that Gandhi is misusing our sacred scripture and involving their teachings with the dirty politics of the day.'[120] For Agarwala, Hinduism could, on the contrary, be more effectively used as a binding force for an aggressive militarism and national protection as envisaged by Tandon: 'We want the violence of the Gita and the Mahabharata to destroy the forces of dasthram, strife and hatred . . . it is my duty today to come out of the silence and serve the great Aryan race in whose traditions I have been brought up.'[121]

Tandon's organisation of the Hind Rakshak Dal must of course be interpreted in the context of Partition. The violence of that event surely imbued leading Congressmen with a sense of powerlessness. Nevertheless, in combination with Tandon's earlier association with the language controversy and other Hindu volunteer movements, his response to the upset of Partition is revealing. The idea of 'defence of community' as well as nation brought the hitherto unspoken association of 'Hindu' with 'India' into the open. The local bases of support for Tandon, especially the enthusiastic response from local Congress Committees, Seva Samitis and RSS, suggested that Tandon's position was shared surprisingly widely under the UP Congress umbrella. The development of Tandon's political thought is illustrative of a broader transformation from the ideas of self-control and discipline evident in the actions of satyagrahis and the

118 'Student Congress Corps' to Tandon, 3 August 1947, Tandon Papers, file 93 NAI.
119 Parthasavathy to Tandon, 22 June 1947, Tandon Papers, file 8 NAI; Kalyan Chand Mohiley to P. D. Tandon 18 November 1947, Tandon Papers, file 29 NAI.
120 Kisan Lall Agarwala to P. D. Tandon, 4 July 1947, Tandon Papers, file 313 NAI.
121 *Ibid.*

akhara movements to a new interest in movements for self-defence. This transformation, from Gandhian individual spiritual 'swaraj' to different forms of individual strengthening for community defence, was made possible by the comparable symbolic sources and discussions in both sets of movements. The messages of the *Gita* and the *Mahabharata*, for example, became part of interlocking sets of languages, from which the resultant political action could be quite variable.

Tandon, Shastri and Tyagi were all therefore able to use notions of a modernised and rational Hindu resurgency that were similar to Gandhian uplift. Yet this time they were connected with enthusiasm for the growing militarisation of volunteer movements. What was particularly surprising about these leaders was their ability to combine practical measures for a community mobilisation which resembled right-wing activity, with a long-term association with the Congress left. P. D. Tandon even corresponded with members of the RSS – an organisation considered by most contemporaries to be on the far right. The outbreak of world war obviously had a dramatic effect, not only on volunteer organisation but on the possibility of such shifts and combinations in political ideologies during the 1940s. One of the most important casualties was Gandhian ahimsa as a prevailing value in the UP Congress. This transformation, in its turn, was to have an important effect on communal politics in UP – as will be seen in chapter 7.

In defence of community: Hindu nationalism and volunteer movements

The growth of volunteer activity transformed communal politics in UP in the 1940s. It was seen in the last section that there was a visible overlap in new emphases on military-style organisation on the one hand and ideas about community defence on the other: Tandon's Hind Rakshak Dal attracted supporters who combined old allegiances to the Congress with ideas about protection of the 'Hindu race'. This combination revealed other patterns: throughout the 1930s and 1940s there were not always clear delineations in personnel and training between supposedly Congress-sponsored volunteer organisations and organisations for 'Hindu defence', like the Mahabir Dals, Hanuman Dals, Arya Vir Dal and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). To some extent the overlap of volunteer activity with religious consciousness was the natural result of the spiritual significance of physical culture in India.[122]

[122] Physical fitness and discipline in Indian wrestling have a long history in cities like Banaras combining physical well-being with spiritualism. Joseph S. Alter, *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India* (Berkeley, 1992).

Gandhi, Bhagwan Das, Sri Prakash and Mahabir Tyagi all related their own physical wellbeing to religion, juxtaposing physical with spiritual fitness.[123] In chapter 2 it was argued that Congress-led protests could follow ritualistic patterns. The physical culture promoted by the volunteer movements associated with the Congress also incorporated ideas and rituals of individual discipline. These ideas were derived from concepts of individual spiritual strength drawn from an array of sources – the most mainstream being Gandhian 'swaraj', Tilakite philosophies of action and the physical organisation and discipline connected with the RSS.

From 1938 the UP was at the forefront of Congress-based volunteer organisation. 'Semi-military training' was started in a camp in Ajodhya, with the intention of creating a nucleus for an all-India volunteer corps. The UPPCC issued circulars to all other provincial committees informing them of the inauguration of an All-Indian Central Training Camp at Faizabad in early December, under the organisation of Nand Kumar Deo Vashishta. During a speech at Banaras, Vashishta hinted at the need to build up the capability to take power in the eventuality of a political crisis, or even the need to engineer such a situation.[124] This information suggested the existence of a homogeneous volunteer movement under Congress direction. In reality, the organisation of volunteer activity across UP fell to groups within specific districts, each with varying agendas. Frequently, this undermined any centralised control on the part of the Provincial Congress Committee, allowing organisations in some districts to pool resources with more obviously communal organisations like the Mahabir Dal and the Arya Vir Dal. For example, at the beginning of September 1938, in Tulsipur, Gonda district, the Hindu Sabha and a selection of Congressmen joined to form a Mahabir Dal and Hanuman Dal.[125] Information on volunteer movements in June 1939 highlighted how the disorganisation and proliferation of volunteer activity could easily feed into other kinds of political allegiance:

> The country is full of mushroom organisations, created to meet the exigencies of the moment and then forgotten, seldom properly organized or systematically developed, without central control or financial backing . . . owing allegiance to nobody, or what is worse, to a local faction.[126]

[123] Correspondence with Bhagwan Das, 31 March 1940 – 6 December 1942, Sri Prakash Papers NMML; Sampurnanand Papers NAI; Narendra Dev Papers, NMML; Letter to Parasram Mehrotra, 9 June 1932, *in Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. L, p. 25; Tyagi, *Meri Kaun Sunega*.
[124] 'Note on Volunteer Movements in India (II)', December 1938, L/PJ/8/678 IOR.
[125] PAI 3 September 1938.
[126] 'Report covering the first half of 1939', L/PJ/8/678 IOR.

The suggestion that at the district levels Congress volunteer activity overlapped with Hindu organisations is also supported by the corresponding growth of the Muslim League Volunteer Corps across UP in the second half of 1938.[127]

There are quantitative sets of evidence as well as descriptions of activities in certain districts, which support the thesis that Congress volunteer activity sometimes subsumed, included or overlapped with Hindu organisations in terms of personnel and organisation. Firstly, in the early years of 1940, there was a noticeable correlation between the success of Congress's volunteer organisations and the popularity of Muslim League corps.[128] The figures of membership for different districts of UP for the period of January to March 1941 were revealing: Kanpur, Aligarh and Agra districts showed enthusiastic support for Congress-related organisations, with relatively high memberships of 3,465, 1,117 and 1,048 respectively. Muslim League and Muslim National Guards were at the relatively high levels of 670, 1,500 and 385 in these districts. Low Congress volunteer activity in Mainpuri and Bijnor seemed to be reflected by low Muslim League activity.[129] Correlation coefficients have to be handled with care. It is not always possible to derive conclusions from closely related quantitative evidence. Some districts simply had more highly organised volunteer activity for both communities and it should not be particularly surprising that large cities such as Kanpur and Allahabad would be at the forefront of volunteer organisation. However, there were also suggestions that membership of the Congress and Hindu organisations were interrelated: over the year 1941, comment on volunteer figures and activities pointed to the sharing of resources and personnel between the Congress and Hindu communal bodies. For example, in January 1941, the loss of RSS members in Lucknow was apparently offset by increases for Congress organisations.[130] Official assessments of volunteer activity in 1939 also supported this thesis: 'In the United Provinces Hindu communal organisations are gaining in popularity to the detriment of recruitment to the Congress Volunteer Corps.'[131]

More convincing still was the on-going trend, through the late 1930s and 1940s, of regional alliances between organisers and members of Congress and Hindu organisations. In the late 1930s, this was suggested

[127] *Ibid.*
[128] APS March 1940. These reports repeatedly state the correspondence between the growth in Hindu volunteer activity and that of Muslim communal defence movements.
[129] Special Branch quarterly report to government on the volunteer situation in UP, 8 May 1941. Police CID Box 82 file 1240/1941 UPSA.
[130] Special Branch report, October 1941, *ibid.*
[131] Minute of W. C. Wallis, 11 March 1940, L/PJ/8/678 IOR.

by the often joint activities of Congress and Hindu organisations during Hindu festivals. In Etah, on 16 September 1938, the Congress Swayam Sevak Dal joined with the Mahabir Dal to escort the Ramlila Jhanda procession through the city. By the beginning of October, the two volunteer organisations were seen jointly policing processions. In the same month, Gandhi Day was celebrated in Dehra Dun with the joint activity of Mahabir Dal, Congress Seva Dal and Sikh Guru Dal volunteers. Bahraich was another district which in late 1938 witnessed Mahabir Dal/Congress cooperation at the Kakora Ganges fair. The extent to which the involvement of Congress volunteers with other organisations projected a communal image onto the Congress as a whole was shown in a Hindu–Muslim affray in Dehra Dun. Here Congress volunteers had worked with Mahabir Dal members in October 1939. The playing of Congress processional music before a mosque subsequently led to a near riot.[132] Other supposedly non-communal organisations also found themselves embroiled in religious quarrels. On 5 June 1941 a clash between the Nau Yuvak Sangh and the Khaksars at a 'mela' in Bareilly district led to a newly inflated membership of the Sangh for purposes of Hindu communal defence. In other districts and cities the Congress outwardly relied upon the already existing Hindu organisations to strengthen their own corps. In Allahabad city, in January 1940, Congressmen decided to revive the 'Kesari Dal' to organise the various Hindu communities and parties into one volunteer group. By mid-1940 it was becoming difficult in some districts to differentiate between the Hindu volunteer bodies. In Agra, for example, the Qaumi Raksha Dal could not be distinguished from the regular Congress corps.[133]

The consequences of this overlap between professedly secular and communal volunteer organisations were vital in the on-going ideological relationship between Congress and Hindu institutions in the 1940s. But the reason why such alliances were possible in the first place related to the necessary amorphousness of UP Congress organisation itself. It has already been suggested in the last section that, through the agency of certain leaders, languages of Hindu nationalism became a medium through which increasing militarism could be justified in mainstream nationalist terms. The radical militaristic rejection of Pakistan by communal organisations was also confused with milder Congress activity. At a meeting of the Arya Samaj in Lucknow on 11 February 1943, at which Gandhi was eulogised, Kunwar Sukh Lal declared that volunteer bodies connected to the Samaj would fight a civil war rather than accept Pakistan.

[132] PAI 8 October; 15 October; 19 November 1938; 14 October 1939.
[133] PAI 27 January; 27 July 1940; 27 June 1941.

Even more alarming was the way in which explicitly aggressive organisations for Hindu defence were associated with cultural organisations which otherwise would have developed little connection to the new upsurge in militarism. Tandon's Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, at its thirty-first meeting between 17 and 19 May 1943, entertained amongst its alumni representatives of the Mahabir Dal and RSS.[134]

By the mid-1940s it also appeared that Congressmen in some districts were moving over to the RSS, or participating in their activities. In Farrukabad, at the end of October 1943, it was reported that several local Congressmen had thrown in their lot with the Sangh. By 1944 the RSS had really taken off in UP. In May ten training camps had been set up in Budaun and Aligarh. Officer training camps were organised for the summer in Moradabad and Banaras. Muzaffarnagar and Lucknow districts quickly developed as strongholds, the latter under the enthusiastic organisation of Tej Narain.[135] At the new training camps in Aligarh the importance of Hindi was stressed, and a recruitment drive was started to attract the sons of 'rich' Hindus. In May 1944, again, linkages were found between the Congress and RSS. It was discovered that a few of the volunteers at an RSS volunteer training camp in Banaras retained connections with CSP workers in Banaras and Gorakhpur. The RSS also moved the other way over to the Congress. In August 1945 two RSS workers in Allahabad agreed to help with the training of Congress volunteers at the physical culture training camp, to be convened by Purushottam Das Tandon. By 1946 the relationship had developed further. At an RSS meeting in Kanpur in February, Balkrishna Sharma assured the khaki-clad volunteers of City Congress support. In Etah, a Congress 'shakti Dal' was started on RSS lines at the beginning of March. In Gorakhpur, in the same month, Congressmen were reportedly taking a keen interest in the activities of the RSS. At Allahabad, during the Hindu New Year on 3 April, 500 RSS volunteers attended a meeting at the house of a 'prominent Congressman' and organised the setting-up of two new branches in Jaunpur.[136]

It is difficult to assess the internal activities of the RSS in UP or any other province in the 1930s and 1940s. The organisation went to great lengths to preserve the secrecy of its proceedings – even going so far as to allow police reporters into certain parts of camps to promote conciliation, but preventing non-members from attending lectures. No reporters

[134] APS 12 February; 21 May 1943.

[135] Fortnightly Report for UP for the first half of June 1944. Home Poll. (I) file 18/6/44 NAI.

[136] APS 5 November 1943; 5, 19, 26 May 1944; 10 August 1945; 22 February 1946; 15 March 1946; 5 April 1946.

were allowed to take notes. However, where meetings were more open it is possible to see some similarities to the rhetoric used in Congress meetings, particularly those of Congress volunteer organisations during civil disobedience. In an RSS officer training camp at Banaras in June 1943, lectures were delivered on subjects such as self-protection and national unity. A sense of national identity was imbued by methods reminiscent of Congress meetings in the early 1930s – examples were used from epics such as the *Mahabharata*, and volunteers were asked to sacrifice their lives for their country in the manner of Shivaji and Rana Pratap.[137]

As 1946 progressed it became clear that the association of Congressmen with the RSS in some districts would help to complicate an already tense communal situation. In April, whilst a Congressman was involved in the training of RSS volunteers in drill in Naini Tal, conflicts with Muslims arose. In Bulandshahr, Muslims were increasingly joining akharas to counteract the influence of the RSS in September. Although Muslim communal volunteer activity was usually directed explicitly against these more extreme Hindu nationalist organisations, Congress was also drawn into the recriminations, largely as a result of its associations with Hindu bodies. At Allahabad, on 27 September, Mahashay Abdul Karin made a speech at a mosque, claiming that the main aim of the Congress volunteer organisations was to attack Muslims. In one district, towards the end of the year, it seemed that a Congressman was ready to use the services of the RSS for the purposes of communal defence. In Banda the Congress Committee president reportedly urged the RSS to take revenge on Muslims for the Pakistan demand during a meeting in the Arya Samaj mandal. In the atmosphere of intense panic and recrimination volunteer bodies, as well as other political organisations, became aggressively communalised. Congress Hindus were also ensnared in this atmosphere: at Kanpur and Unao rich Hindus raised subscriptions in November 1946 for the financing of a multiplicity of volunteer bodies, including the UP Congress Raksha Dal.[138]

Whilst volunteer movements had been a feature of nationalist politics from the first 'mass movements' in UP, they did not become a regular feature of provincial political life until the late 1930s, with the onset of war in Europe and the growth of the Muslim League. The rapid rise and development of military-style organisations hindered their systematic and ordered development, as did the diverse and often contradictory messages sent out to them by the main political institutions such as the Congress in

[137] 'Note on the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh training camps held in various provinces during the months of May and June 1944', Home Poll. file 28/3/43 NAI.
[138] APS 26 April; 6 September; 27 September; 8 November; 29 November 1946.

UP.[139] Although there were province-wide organisations like the Mahabir Dal, Khaksars, Qaumi Seva Dal and Hanuman Dal, their activities and organisation depended upon the specific political context of their district or locality.[140] Even the relatively centralised Congress-related organisations were fluid in their membership and organisation across districts.[141] Given the opportunities for parallel movements for communal defence, Congress volunteer bodies were inevitably confused or allied with Hindu nationalist organisations – sometimes for the very purpose of greater uniformity and organisation. It was perhaps logical, then, that Mahabir Dals, RSS and Congress volunteers should join together to carry out policing activities, or to pool resources for physical training.

The associations of Congress volunteer organisations with Hindu communal bodies in some districts contributed to Hindu–Muslim cleavages within other organisations. This occurred in Meerut in 1946, as will be seen in chapter 7. Communal polarisation did not occur in all localities. The Khaksars had an on-going relationship with the Congress, and fluctuated in their allegiance to that party and the Muslim League on the basis of individual leaders and factions. The Ahrars also joined with Congress volunteer organisations in the late 1930s and early 1940s. But the popularity of the Muslim National Guard, and the force of its communal rhetoric, were inevitably linked to the perception of a Congress–Hindu nationalist alliance, which could be viewed through the apparent Congress–RSS/Mahabir Dal cooperation in some districts. It has already been seen that the philosophical basis of physical culture for individuals like Tandon did not sit comfortably with a cross-communal volunteer effort. Organisations like the Mahabir Dal were more obviously concerned with the policing of Hindu festivals and functions. Congress cooperation with them would have implicated Congressmen as protectors of 'Hindu rights'. Volunteer activity also reflected mainstream political rivalry. Where more obviously communal volunteer bodies were able to throw in their lot with the Congress or Muslim League, political competition could easily overlap with communal rivalry.

The careers of Algu Rai Shastri, Mahabir Tyagi, Purushottam Das Tandon and Sampurnanand all illustrate the ways in which Hindu

139 'Note on the Volunteer Movements in India (II) December 1938', L/PJ/8/678 IOR.

140 For example, figures for the Mahabir Dal fluctuated greatly between districts, from 597 members in Bahraich to only 13 in Saharanpur, for the first half of 1941. Special Branch quarterly report, 8 May 1941, Police CID Box 82 file 1240/1941 UPSA.

141 *Ibid.* The membership figures for all Congress-related volunteer bodies in Gorakhpur district came to 8,835. In Moradabad, a district of early Congress support, the total membership figure was only 445.

nationalist ideologies and languages of politics could have a pervasive effect on political life, alongside and in combination with other forms of political ideology and language. Shastri, Tandon and Sampurnanand were all fêted in the mid-1930s for their attachment to socialist principles. The domination of Nehru in all-India politics helped to create an assumption that forms of communal mobilisation necessarily reflected right-wing politics and conservatism. Socialism is considered to be a largely secular ideology in this interpretation of Indian politics.[142] However, in contrast to institutional Hindu nationalism such as the Mahasabha, the more informal connections between communal and non-communal ideologies and languages in UP were not necessarily constrained by socialist ideologies. The Hindu Mahasabha contained a strong Hindu landholding and big-business membership, more likely to be attached to political moderation. But the Hindu Mahasabha in UP was only one thin wedge in the edifice of a range of ideas about community and nation, which manifested themselves in a heteroglossia of languages within mainstream institutions such as the Congress.

The significance of these languages of politics, concerned with religious community, also varied according to district and locality. The infusion of political rhetoric and activity with religious significations probably had a greater effect upon subsequent political events in Kanpur, Agra and Banaras than in rural areas of UP. The relationship of the Congress to Hindu reformist institutions such as the Arya Samaj, through particular leaders, reflected this differentiated effect. In Kanpur such institutional connections were obvious. The communal atmosphere here was consequently often explosive. In Banaras the connections were more subtle. The presence of Banaras Hindu University, the history of the Hindu Mahasabha, and the significance of the city for Hinduism generally, created more naturally accepted connections between political activism and religious devotion. Even socialist leaders like Sri Prakash and Sampurnanand could easily retain an interest in forms of politicised Hinduism. In all of the main UP cities there were certain common features: Hindu militancy in these forms were most clearly patronised by middle-class, upper- and commercial-caste groups.[143]

142 This assumption is also made by some of the most recent studies of communalism and secular politics: for example, Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism*, pp. 202–3.

143 The respondents to Tandon's organisation of the Hind Rakshak Dal were mainly Brahman, Agarwals and other Vaishya groups. This is supported by Zoya Hasan, *Dominance and Mobilization*, in her stress on the Bania and Brahman backing for the Arya Samaj in Aligarh. In contrast, Gooptu has highlighted a different kind of Hindu militancy amongst the urban power castes of Kanpur.

The activities of the volunteer organisations demonstrated the continued influence of Hindu nationalism in the political life of UP. They also illustrated the degree to which political ideology was far from rigid in a practical and organisational sense. There are indications that the memberships of Congress and Hindu volunteer organisations were interchangeable in certain towns and districts. The appeal of Hindu nationalism as a binding and disciplining force continued to influence Congressmen of varying political persuasions. It was also acknowledged as an effective way of building concepts of 'civic defence'. Community defence, the strong appreciation of a cultural enemy, and the religious content of physical culture allowed nationalist volunteer organisations to emulate the activities of organisations like the RSS and the Mahabir Dal, where the particular conditions of the locality permitted. The Hind Rakshak Dal demonstrated how military expertise could often build on a new aggressive form of Hindu nationalism, which rejected the Gandhian reading of the *Gita*.[144] Here too, then, a range of political ideas about the relationship between 'Hindu community' and national protection could co-exist in a dialogic relationship, defying straightforward explanations which situate the heart of secular politics in Congress institutions. What is more apparent is the sense in which notions apparently drawn from Hinduism were being re-employed to reflect again a changing political context – this time one of a world at war.

[144] The differing interpretations of the *Bhagavad Gita* in Indian nationalism illuminates the variability of early twentieth-century Hindu nationalism. Tilak viewed the text as espousing collective discipline and action. Harvey, 'The Secular as Sacred?' pp. 321–31. In contrast, Gandhi acquired a gentler understanding, declaring that 'I have led my life under its protective shade.' Letter, 31 July 1932, in *Collected Works*, vol. L. Other interpretations, such as that of Kishan Lal Agarwal of Kanpur in 1947, saw it as a text of violence. Agarwala to Tandon, 4 July 1947, Tandon Papers, file 313 NAI.

6 Congress 'Raj', riots and Muslim mass contact

> If every difference of opinion is to be labelled as communal, none but those who belong to the majority community will be safe from the attack of being communalist. I call this tyranny of the majority (Khaliquzzaman).[1]

Historians of the subcontinent are agreed that, after the provincial elections of 1937 and the subsequent formation of ministries, UP politics were polarised between the Congress and the Muslim League. After 1937 party politics in the province were more clearly divided along communal lines when compared with the rest of the decade. Most historical interpretations of these pivotal years have emphasised the importance of negotiations between Hindu and Muslim elites and their subsequent influence on a malleable electorate.[2] The Congress–Muslim League cooperation in 1936 and during the elections is contrasted with the situation in 1938 and 1939 in which Congress and League competed for the Muslim 'masses', the latter party using communal propaganda. The breaking point between League and Congress is explained in terms of the collapse of negotiations shortly after the elections – the League request (headed by Khaliquzzaman) for inclusion in the ministry being rejected by Nehru and the Congress after the failure of the League to agree to absorption into the Congress as a whole. The analyses of this break emphasise competition between UP elites and the degeneration of this competition into communal polarisation.[3]

[1] Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 182.

[2] Hasan, *India's Partition*, pp. 1–43; Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 7–71; Kesavan, 'Communal Politics'.

[3] Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, pp. 169–78; Hasan, *India's Partition*, pp. 9–19. Hasan points out that 'the League manifesto, minus its rhetoric designed to create a Muslim constituency, reflected a fair measure of agreement with Congress policies' but that the Congress failure to agree to coalition with the League in 1937 set the two parties at ideological loggerheads. Kesavan, 'Communal Politics', pp. 17–25. Kesavan cites the opinion of Maulana Azad, who actually believed that Congress's refusal to allow the League into a coalition was a turning point in the road to Pakistan. Brass, in agreement with Peter Reeves (*Landlords and Governments in UP*), suggests that the

These interpretations of the years 1936–9 include a number of assumptions and omissions that open up fresh questions regarding the Congress–League antipathy. Most importantly, it is unclear how elite competition caused electoral patterns to follow a communal orientation. Historians have pointed to the ability of the League to link the new anti-Congress, anti-Hindu orientation after 1937 to localised grievances regarding the Muslim position as a minority community: the unjust treatment of Muslim officials, municipal politics in towns such as Kanpur, or the decisions of local authorities against a Muslim community over religious territory.[4] But how communal politics came to have a 'mass' appeal, as well as a proto-nationalist appeal which manifested itself in elections, is still debatable. Interpretations of the 1937–9 period have tended either to privilege the elite or to explore localised communal disputes at a subaltern level.[5] The linkage between the two levels of political life in UP – the question of how the Congress–League split related to political activity in streets and villages – is still something of an open question. The significance of the early 1930s, and in particular the impact of communal politics during civil disobedience on political orientations in the late 1930s, on the other hand, has been underemphasised, highlighting 1937 as a radical turning point in UP politics. This has led many historians to concentrate almost entirely on 'Muslim separatism' as the crucial and determining factor in communal polarisation between Congress and League, leading them largely to dismiss the earlier effects of Hindu nationalism upon and within the Congress. As a result, there have only been general suggestions about the importance of the manipulation of religious symbols in the creation of nationalist thought, and how this activity linked the early 1930s with the later ministry period.[6] How far was the communal polarisation in politics after 1937 the result of a long-term use of religious symbolism

League was a landlord/lawyer-dominated party in the mid- and late 1930s, with a largely 'undemocratic' ideology. It nevertheless cooperated with the Congress during the 1937 elections. For Brass the League–Congress split is related more to a long-term attempt by Muslim landed elites to maintain their privileges.

4 Hasan, *India's Partition*, pp. 16–17; Kesavan, 'Communal Politics', chapter 3.

5 Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in North India*; Joshi, 'Bonds of Community, Ties of Religion'. Pandey discusses elites and subaltern politics, but does not fully explain how the two interlink in the context of communal politics. Joshi provides a detailed account of the working of communal politics at a grassroots level but, again, does not fully relate it to a higher level of politics.

6 Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, pp. 121–7. Brass makes the general point about political myths often surpassing objective political reality in their significance: 'The history of Muslim separatism demonstrates two important general features in the development of nationalist movements – the primacy of political choice and the ways in which a people creates its own history through a conscious process of symbol selection': p. 121.

by Congress and others, rather than simply the result of failed bargaining between Congress and League leaders?

This chapter will investigate these problems of the ministry period in the context of three specific themes. Firstly, it will look at the nature of Muslim League rhetoric and propaganda against the Congress from 1937. How was the UP League able effectively to describe the Congress government in the province as 'Hindu Raj' despite the on-going support for the Congress by important Muslim groups – the ulema and the Ahrars? The effectiveness of League propaganda in building a mass movement for Muslim separatism suggests that communal polarisation after 1937 was created by more than just the failure of UP elites to compromise over ministerial posts. The description of Congress rule as 'Hindu Raj' provided a symbolic link between the agendas of the League opposition in the UP Assembly and the grievances of Muslims over jobs, religious rights and education at local levels. 'Hindu Raj' could mean an apprehension of majority rule over the province, or a fear of the consequences in specific localities. However, the success of the League association of 'Congress' with 'Hindu absorption' was only made possible because Congressmen had used (and in some cases continued to use) their own religious symbolism to delineate the nation. It is also significant that the UP Congress used this sort of rhetoric mainly in meetings in *localities*: for the Congress too, politico-religious symbolism was a means of drawing town and province together. Localised grievances were only given political and communal meaning at a provincial and national level because of their incorporation into an overall idea of what it meant to be Indian. This was achieved by the symbolic content of Congress's rhetoric that continued to resonate in the League claim after 1937 of the tyranny of 'Hindu Raj'.

Secondly, the linkage of local disputes to the formulation of national and separatist ideas after 1937 will be investigated through detailed examples of Hindu–Muslim riots and conflicts between 1937 and 1939. In the context of the Congress's provincial power after 1937, the continued virulence of Hindu–Muslim conflict in the towns and districts of UP seemed to bolster the League's communal claims. Congress's failure to deal effectively with the 'communal problem' made ministers vulnerable to accusations of communal manoeuvring. Communal aggression in particular localities could be linked to the homogenising aims of the Congress at provincial and national levels. The 'trampling' of Muslim 'religious rights' was viewed as one element in an overall Congress 'Hindu Raj' policy to assimilate Muslim difference. The party political context of Hindu–Muslim riots between 1937 and 1939 suggests that there was both continuity and change in these religious conflicts when compared with the riots of the early 1930s. One clear element of change was the

ostensible disengagement of Congress with communal institutions. By 1939 the Hindu Sabhas in UP had begun to detach themselves from the UP Congress.[7] This also occurred at more localised levels, in relation to specific grievances over worship and 'religious' or 'civil' rights. Complaints about the Congress government's 'pro-Muslim' policy and deliberate ignorance of 'Hindu rights' began to surface in institutions such as the Hindu Sabhas.[8] This had the effect of pushing League recriminations more in the direction of the Congress. Although Muslim League propaganda often compared the Congress with the Hindu Mahasabha, it is significant that for the UP League neither the Hindu Sabha nor Arya Samaj were ever held fully responsible for 'Hindu communalism'. Hindu–Muslim riots were blamed on the Congress. After 1937 the image of aggressive Hindu majoritarianism had somehow transferred from the Mahasabha to the Congress. At the same time Hindu–Muslim conflict assumed a more explicitly political significance when compared with the riots of the 1920s and early 1930s.

Thirdly, the failure of the Congress to remedy its deficient Muslim support, despite the backing of influential Muslim groups in UP, will be investigated. The failed Muslim mass contacts campaign, spearheaded by Muhammad Ashraf and Jawaharlal Nehru, helped to unearth evidence that UP Muslims related political approaches to the Muslim 'masses' to the perceived homogenising aims of the Congress. It was ultimately Congress's own symbolic depiction of the Indian nation which limited its success in recruiting more widespread Muslim support. To an extent, this limitation was a consequence of the complicated nature of Muslim factionalism in UP. Much has been made of the divisiveness of Muslim society in UP in an effort to suggest that the Congress had a stable and identifiable Muslim backing in the province.[9] However, the fluidity of Congress's UP Muslim support has been underestimated: mid-1930s Muslim League disorganisation,[10] Shia–Sunni disputes over Madhe Sahaba, and divisions in the leadership of Islam in UP[11] did not mean that Muslim groups who supported the Congress in UP did so consistently because of a lack of an alternative cohesive Muslim party. Neither was their support irreversible. In 1937 it appeared that the Congress

[7] This was not just the result of the Congress ruling of December 1938, preventing Congress Committee members from holding similar membership simultaneously within a 'communal organisation'. There was also a definite Mahasabha decision to move away from the Congress, especially under the presidentship of Savarkar.

[8] These complaints were voiced especially in Farrukabad and Mathura. PAI 29 April, 20 May 1939.

[9] Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, pp. 17–24.

[10] Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, pp. 135–51.

[11] Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, p. 19.

had made a firm alliance with Ahrars throughout the province. But by early 1939, and in 1941, some Ahrar factions were moving towards the Muslim League. The failure of the Congress to unite disparate Muslim groups behind the Congress was regionally specific. But in a broad sense it also related to the competing appeal of League and Congress in terms of nationalist ideology. Indeed, in its attempt to recruit Muslims, the UP Congress even inadvertently strengthened League propaganda and revealed, in Muslim eyes, the continuing influence of that apparent Hindu nationalism which had characterised Congress activity in the early 1930s.

The decision to put up 'Congress Muslims' in by-elections in 1938, rather than come to an agreement with the League, was one policy that seemed to reflect Congress's desire to absorb and control all provincial political activity. On the other hand, the UP Congress also appeared to have accepted the cultural and social 'separateness' of the Muslim community in the Muslim mass contacts campaign. It was eventually agreed that only Muslims and not Hindus should attempt to recruit new Muslim members into the organisation. Here was an insoluble contradiction. Congress activity throughout the 1930s had been motivated by a belief in the ultimate unity of the Indian civic body. This belief was created both by those imagining the nation as truly 'Hindu' and therefore absorbent, and by figures like Nehru, who denied the identity-forming aspects of religious community. On the other hand, Congress was forced to recognise the existence of differentiated political, cultural and religious identities in its efforts to broaden its appeal as a political party. This contradiction, too, lent credibility to the League claims that Congress efforts to recruit or attract Muslims were in fact disingenuous attempts to force a 'Hindu' worldview onto its supporters.

Congress and the claims of 'Hindu Raj'

The decision of the Congress in the summer of 1937 to form a ministry without entering into a coalition with the League encouraged the latter party to employ a directly communal political appeal. But this split does not of itself explain why the League was able effectively to describe the Congress as a 'Hindu' party. Nehru's reasons for not wanting the coalition illustrated tendencies within the Congress which the League were later able to describe as a form of 'Hindu Raj'. Nehru realised the position of strength that an overwhelming majority in the UP Legislative Assembly offered.[12] It was his intention that the Congress could and

[12] Nehru was well within his constitutional rights to reject League overtures for a coalition, since Congress had achieved an outright electoral victory. However, the attempts

should now absorb the League entirely since, in Congress eyes, there could be no other progressive nationalist position outside the Congress. This striving for political absorption resurfaced throughout the ministry period. Whilst in the eyes of Nehru it represented little more than political opportunism in 1937, Congress domination came to be associated with the symbolism of communal bullying, Hindu assimilation, and the rejection of minority difference. Nehru's second concern was that Congress feared upsetting those Muslim groups who were loyal Congressmen, if a coalition with the League were considered.[13] However, Congress attempts between 1937 and 1939 to manoeuvre between Muslim political and religious factions only bolstered the cynical view that it was attempting to divide the Muslim community. This was particularly the case in the matter of the on-going Shia–Sunni dispute, in which the antecedent 'Hindu' image of the Congress led to suspicions of its motives. Mushirul Hasan has also pointed out that Congress was under pressure from right-wing Congressmen who, acting in the interests of the Hindu Mahasabha, deeply opposed the idea of a Congress–League coalition.[14] This idea is backed up by the veiled words of Nehru himself, who 'feared reaction among Congressmen in general'.[15]

Nehru admitted that 'what worries me is the larger question of getting Muslims in a body to join Congress and to get rid of their vague suspicion of that body. For undoubtedly there is that suspicion and hitch.'[16] Here lay the crux of the League claim that the Congress represented 'Hindu Raj'. It will be seen in this section that the 'Hindu' image of Congress ultimately related back to the dialogic mix of symbols employed by Congressmen to represent India and what it meant to be Indian. Whilst the rejection of the League coalition made an opening for Muslim communal propaganda, it was the on-going political image of the UP Congress as a whole that gave that propaganda resonance. This will be examined in relation to two major themes – firstly, how ideas of Congress's provincial dominance were transformed into a sense of Hindu communal domination;

to absorb the League seemed to push the victory too far – especially when past UP Muslim attitudes towards political representation are considered. Farzana Shaikh, 'Muslims and Political Representation in Colonial India: The Making of Pakistan', *Modern Asian Studies*, 20, 3 (July 1986). Shaikh points out that the Muslim community, especially in UP, had a political and cultural tradition of conceiving of representation in terms of 'community' rather than majority.

13 Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 21 July 1937, in Nanda, *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, vol. VII, p. 461.

14 Hasan, *India's Partition*, p. 13.

15 Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 21 July 1937, in Nanda, *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, vol. VII, p. 461.

16 Nehru to Abdul Walli, 30 March 1937, in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, 10 vols. (New Delhi, 1973–82), vol. VIII, p. 77.

secondly, an analysis of Congress attempts to maintain its Muslim support in UP, which came to be viewed as communal 'dabbling' and which in the long run proved to be counter-productive.

Whatever the Congress's ministerial intentions from 1937, political observers related crises almost automatically to a supposed Hindu–Muslim 'political schism'.[17] A range of issues, from the amalgamation of the boy scouts to volunteer movements and strikes, or disputes over religious festivals and processions, were continually related to the communal implications of Congress–League antagonism. This was an especially popular interpretation for official British observers of the political scene in UP. Writing about Hindu–Muslim strife in April 1939, Haig remarked: 'To my mind there is no doubt that the root cause of the trouble is that the Muslims look upon the present Government as "Hindu Raj" and to a large extent, the Hindus also have the same feeling.'[18] Haig believed that it was a feeling of Muslim political impotency in the face of this 'Hindu Raj' that provoked groups of Muslims in certain localities to highlight religious grievances. He continually made the point that the image of Hindu rule also existed in the minds of the Congress electors:

> The root of the matter seems largely to be that the Hindu rank and file think that now they can assert themselves and disregard Muslim susceptibilities to a greater degree than previously because in their view they have a Hindu Government.[19]

Officialdom was prone to the fudging of definitions. It is difficult to ascertain what was meant by 'Hindu rank and file' or 'Muslim susceptibilities'. This ambiguity revealed a tendency to essentialise political categories – a common feature of political comment in the late 1930s. The assumed existence of a 'Hindu Raj' or a 'Muslim opposition' made these two ideas eminently possible since, as has been shown in chapters 2 and 3, rhetoric and imagery played an important part in shaping artificial political polarisation. This was demonstrated by Haig's next comment:

> The inclusion of two Congress Muslims in the Cabinet is of course not the slightest solace to the feelings of the Muslim community as a whole, who regard the present ministry as a Hindu administration, the Congress as a Hindu body and the Congress Ministers as renegades.[20]

[17] 'Situation in India 1946' and 'Probable Developments in India, 1946', War Office Military Intelligence Bureau WO208/761A PRO. 'The issue in India is fundamentally communal and religious . . . it is not a political issue (in the ordinary accepted sense of the term) between 2 political parties . . . though this is the guise under which it is generally presented.'

[18] Haig to Linlithgow, 10 April 1939, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/102 IOR.

[19] Haig to Linlithgow, 27 March 1939, in *ibid.* [20] *Ibid.*

Haig's sweeping generalisations about 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' political ideas were not simply official simplifications, despite the fact that it was largely in British interests to create the sense of such a polarisation by the early 1940s. Discussion about 'the Muslim view' or 'Hindu politics' had become current and acceptable by the late 1930s. Most importantly, Congress politics too had contributed to this process, as was seen in chapter 2, through the incorporation of colonial notions of communal history, alongside a broad modernised and reformed notion of Hinduism. In 1936, during a political tour of Western UP, even Nehru was associated with the Hindu pantheon in the rhetoric of Congress supporters.

It was against the background of this heteroglossia of religious and political languages used to describe the nation that the Congress in power came to be associated with the threat to minority rights and with the idea of Hindu domination. This process was illustrated in the Legislative Assembly during 1937 and 1938 by the premier – Govind Ballabh Pant – as he defended the ideals of majority rule according to democratic principles. At the beginning of October 1937 the Assembly debated the question of the demand for a Constituent Assembly. Muhammad Ismail Khan, a League member, had moved an amendment that, in the absence of an agreed settlement, the representation for Muslims in a Constituent Assembly should be the same as in the Communal Award. Nawab Muhammad Ahmad Sa'id Khan also moved that landlords, depressed classes and other minorities should have special representation. Although the latter request smacked of the vain attempt of a Muslim elite to hold onto its old privileges, the method by which Pant rejected the amendments lent weight to Haig's comments about the 'enthusiasm' of the Hindu majority. The premier replied to Ismail Khan:

> The security of their interests will depend on the extent to which they continue to retain the confidence of the general mass of the people, and the attitude of the general mass towards them will be determined by their attitude towards the large and vast mass of the people in the country . . . no artificial guarantees can secure for them what their real conduct and their practical behaviour will deprive them of.[21]

Against the background of increasingly virulent League communal propaganda and the developing symbolism of Congress rule as 'Hindu Raj', Pant's bold rejection of special minority representation echoed earlier rejections of the Communal Award in 1933.[22] The 'complete organic unity'

[21] *Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of the United Provinces, Official Report*, vol. II, pp. 1661–70.

[22] B. S. Moonje, Madan Mohan Malaviya and M. S. Aney had articulated a democratic position in opposition to the Communal Award in their manifesto for the Independent

called for by Pant could thereby acquire a more sinister meaning in the eyes of a Muslim party piqued by lack of ministerial responsibility. The position of the Congress ministry was given extra publicity by the decision of all Muslim League members to walk out of the Assembly, along with Muslim members of the Independent Party. In 1938, Pant's juxtaposition of a 'composite body politic' against representation for minorities surfaced again in connection with representation in the services.[23] Pant inadvertently fed fears of a Congress drive for assimilation in a reply to criticisms of the budget of 1938. There had been a complaint that the Rural Development Officer was in fact a Congressman, to which Pant replied 'Who is not a Congressman in his heart?'[24] There was not such a great difference in this position compared with those inclusivist notions of the 'Hindu' which claimed that it could contain Islam and Christianity; that all Muslim were originally converts from Hinduism and that 'depressed classes' should be seen as part of the Hindu fold.

The interpretation of Pant's words as a form of 'Hindu politics' was made possible by the past history of special political and occupational privileges enjoyed by Muslims in UP. According to Pant, it was still the case in 1938 that Muslims were disproportionately represented in official posts: They made up 44 per cent of the Deputy Collectors of the province, 38 percent of Superintendents of Police, 50 per cent of the vets and 52 per cent of the constables.[25] But against the background of the Lucknow Pact of 1916 and the promises of the Communal Award in 1932, Pant's rejection of the principle of special representation worried UP Muslim leaders. In their eyes, Pant's views seemed 'Mahasabhaite' for two important and interconnected reasons. Firstly, whilst Congress talked of the organic unity of all classes and religions in India and the advantages of a secular and democratic state in the Assembly, it continued to mobilise political support by evoking religious imagery in towns and villages. Congress talk of rule of the majority could not appear unambiguously secularist whilst it continued to manipulate these symbols, often in quite an arbitrary way. Secondly, Pant's comments occurred in the context of serious and on-going Hindu–Muslim conflict in Allahabad, Varanasi,

Congress Party. M. S. Aney and M. M. Malaviya, *The Congress Nationalist Party: What it Stands For and Why Every Indian Should Support It* (Allahabad, 1934).

23 The debate on communal representation in the services was in March 1938. In his speech, Pant declared that 'in a democratic state we have to treat the body politic as a composite unit, and every member thereof should be regarded as having equal rights and equal privileges but there is no room for separate electorates in such a state'. Speech by Pant on 28 March 1938, in *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, vol. VIII, pp. 108–17.

24 *Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of the United Provinces, Official Report*, vol. IV, pp. 559–71.

25 *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, vol. VIII, pp. 108–17.

Dadri, Pipra, Pilibhit, Amroha, Azamgarh, Rudauh and Sitapur. Muslim representatives in the Assembly were inevitably sensitive about the recurrence of rioting and therefore more open to popular suggestions that the Congress represented Hindu power. Congress's electoral victory of 1937 did not create this situation. Both of these circumstances – Congress's use of religious rhetoric and the problems of communal conflict – were of significance right up to the elections. On 11 August 1936, in Allahabad, the local Congress Committee made use of the Janmastami festivities to build up electoral support. During the festival, Vijai Lakshmi Pandit made a speech comparing jail-goers with Lord Krishna. Within the same period of demonstrations in Allahabad, Muhammad Ashraf attempted to attract Muslims to the Congress by highlighting the issue of Palestine's Jewish immigration.[26] Over the next year Allahabad became an arena for protracted Hindu–Muslim conflict, provoked, according to the testimony of contemporary observers, by the attempts of Congress to appeal directly to Muslims – a privilege reserved by the League.[27]

From 1937 the UP Congress therefore found itself in a predicament in relation to the politics of religious community. It was continually obliged to explain the dichotomy between its outward secular pronouncements and the obvious religious style of some of its local cadres. In addition, the flirtations with Hindu nationalism of earlier years had created expectations among Hindu Sabhaites, who now returned to haunt the Congress as it attempted to implement its 'secular' policy. From late 1938, and throughout 1939, most district Hindu Sabhas – even those including the membership of Congressmen or ex-Congressmen – remained critical of Provincial Congress policy and ministerial activity.[28] *The Pratap*, a widely read Hindi paper, printed searing attacks on the Congress government's 'pro-Muslim' policy.[29] Any attempts by Congress to ingratiate themselves with Muslim groups in this atmosphere were depicted by opposition Muslims as a cynical attempt to disrupt Muslim unity. Both the Shia–Sunni troubles and the Muslim mass contacts campaign were interpreted in this way. Whatever the Congress attempted, 'their good intentions have not saved them from ceaseless attacks on communal grounds from both sides'.[30]

The failure of Congress's attempts to build substantial Muslim support in the late 1930s therefore related to its long-standing ideological links with Hindu nationalism. Nearly all League complaints dealt with

[26] PAI 17 August 1935; 1, 15 August 1936.
[27] Hallett to Brabourne, 6 September 1938, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F125/101 IOR.
[28] Haig to Linlithgow, 9 May 1939, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/102 IOR.
[29] *The Pratap*, 6 May 1939; 28 April 1939.
[30] Haig to Linlithgow, 10 May 1939, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/102 IOR.

the implementation of policy in UP on a symbolic basis and in relation to localised power. There was little that was directly provocative to Muslims in the 'Vidya Mandir' education plans, or the 'Bande Mataram' song, but their symbolism could easily relate to a sense of Hindu power. This was the result of the ease in which the political languages they contained had encouraged a concrete sense of communal polarisation. It was also the result of local-provincial differences in the application of a clearly secular stance. Consequently, even something as seemingly innocuous as the nature of the badge worn by the Seva Samiti scouts could provoke paranoia about Hindu domination. The proposed amalgamation of the Samiti with the Baden Powell scouts was opposed on the grounds that the 'lotus' insignia worn by the Seva Samiti would portray an overtly 'Hindu' image. Importantly, within this Muslim opposition to the amalgamation of the scout movement, was the concern that the Congress would dominate any future 'single' movement.[31] Here the use of Hindu imagery was highlighted as an example of majoritarian political domination. This view of the Congress was played out in local power disputes. It was noticed, for example, that there were a large number of cases against Muslim police officers sent to the 'Anti-Corruption' Department.[32] These complaints provided opportunities to highlight the 'arrogance and oppression of Hindu officials' – not because there was a great deal to complain about, but as an on-going attempt to expose the supposed existence of 'Hindu Raj'. In all of these cases, supposed Muslim deprivation was relatively unimportant. More crucial was the point that the failure of Muslims to maintain localised political advantages reflected a lack of political clout at a provincial level. As Haig put it in May 1939:

> The one substantial grievance of the Muslims is that they have no part in the Government. This is true and is a serious matter, but administratively they have little to complain of except that they do not have the general political influence, and the pull in petty local matters.[33]

Muslim League objections to Congress power therefore related to the feeling of what such power represented or symbolised as much as what Congress policy achieved in practice. Jawaharlal Nehru and Muhammad Ashraf in the Publicity Department of the All-India Congress Committee attempted to counter the League depictions of Congress as a

[31] Linlithgow to Governors generally, 1 April 1938, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/100 IOR. 'Certain Governors emphasized the important point of the Muslim opposition to amalgamation with what is a fundamentally Hindu movement.'
[32] Hasan, *India's Partition*, p. 16.
[33] Haig to Linlithgow, 10 May 1939, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/102 IOR.

Hindu party.[34] Nevertheless, recourse to political languages and symbolism which evoked the religious continued at the highest levels in UP. Whilst on an election tour in Almora, in support of the election of Pandit Badri Datt Pande, Govind Ballabh Pant used the occasion of Vasant Panchami[35] to whip up religiously inspired enthusiasm for the Congress candidate. He told the story of a farmer in Faizabad district who had told his zamindar that he would not vote for a non-Congress candidate and was thereafter beaten. Pant went on: 'Hiranya Kahyap had asked Prahalad not to pronounce the name of Ram and was tortured by various means – was thrown in the fire, pushed down from a hill-top. But in the modern age, that farmer showed the courage of Prahalad.' Later in the speech, the religious references became even more explicit: 'When you go to a temple to worship the God, you do not see whether the idol is ugly or good-looking. Likewise, the idol of Congress is before you and by offering the flowers of votes you have to worship Bharat Mata.'[36] Here was direct encouragement of the actual worship of the Congress as a sort of deity-mediator to the mother goddess of the nation. Pant was soon to be premier of the Congress ministry in the United Provinces. Distancing the provincial Congress from League accusations in these circumstances must have been difficult.

The on-going Congress method of local mobilisation, exhibited by Pant in Almora, helps to explain the appeal and strength of the League's communally motivated pronouncements. It also accounts for the proliferation of complaints against the Congress ministry on the basis of 'Hindu' symbolism. It makes sense of the Provincial Congress's own decision to sponsor the employment of an overtly religious and communal appeal to Muslims in attempts to attract support for the Congress. Religious rhetoric was employed to attract Muslims despite Nehru's claim that 'communal' questions were unimportant by comparison with social and economic issues. Muhammad Ashraf was employed to call on a sense of attachment to Islam despite the continually reiterated claims that the Congress stood for purely secular values. Once again, Congress principles contradicted Congress practice. Provincial-level pronouncements about secularism and minority rights were easily represented as hollow – especially when a number of important Congressmen continued to use

[34] Ashraf to the Director of Rural Uplift Department, 15 August 1938, AICC file 30/1937 NMML.

[35] Vasant Panchami is a Hindu bathing day during the month of Magh, heralding spring. During the festival, Saraswati is worshipped and prabhat pheris are taken out. Clay images of Saraswati are taken for immersion in the Ganges. G. R. Sholapurkar, *Religious Rights and Festivals of India* (Varanasi, 1990), pp. 249–50.

[36] *Shakti*, 17 February 1937, reproduced in *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, vol.VII, pp. 411–14.

religious symbolism during elections and mass mobilisations. This process informed Muslim views of the Congress in the latter part of the decade and the 1940s.

Congress's predicament in recruiting Muslims in UP was clearly illustrated in the on-going dispute between Shias and Sunnis. The majority of Muslims in both the Congress and the Muslim League were Sunni, whilst Shias made up only about 3 per cent of the UP Muslim population.[37] However, the Shia community had a disproportionate political influence, especially in the city of Lucknow, the seat of the Shia Nawabs of Awadh. Jaunpur, Muzzafarnagar, Bijnor, Moradabad, Faizabad, Banaras, Basti and Allahabad were also districts with relatively large Shia populations.[38] There were a number of influential figures in the UP League who were Shia – for instance the Raja of Mahmudabad, Syed Wazir Hasan and Syed Riza Ali. The doctrinal and belief system differences between the two sects seemed insignificant from the outside, but were in fact profound.[39] Sunnis believed that church and state should be one, whilst Shias held that they should be separate.[40] There were also crucial differences in public religious practice between the two sects, most notably the Shia convention of taziadari – a mourning ceremony surrounding the martyrdom of Hussain.

When the Congress in UP appeared to be involving itself in the complicated manoeuvres surrounding the Shia–Sunni trouble in Lucknow, claims of a Hindu nationalist conspiracy 'to split the Muslim community' quickly sprang to the surface. The trouble between the two sects ostensibly derived from a difference of belief with respect to the three Khalifas who succeeded the prophet and who preceded Ali. The Shias held that the Khalifas were usurpers and guilty of acts of tyranny and oppression against Ali and his wife. The festival of Mohurram represents a mourning ceremony for the sons of Ali – Hasan and Hussain, massacred at the hands of the Khalifas. In contrast, the Sunnis believed that the first three Khalifas were rightful rulers. In 1906, Shia–Sunni disputes arose over the celebration of Moharram. The Sunnis recited verses in praise of the first four Khalifas – a practice which came to be known as the 'Madhe Sahaba', or 'praise of the companions'. In retaliation, the Shias used the 'tabarra', or curses of the Khalifas for their inhuman treatment

37 Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, p. 25.

38 'Statement of the All-Parties Shia Conference', 11 January 1946, by Khan Bahadur Syed Kalbe Abbas, General Secretary, Rae Bareilly, UP L/PJ/8/693 Coll.117/E7 IOR.

39 Whilst the root of doctrinal disagreement concerned historical interpretations of the Khalifas succeeding Mohammed, the Shias had also adopted their own separate mosques, 'shariat' (law) and religious teaching. The Muslim University at Aligarh had a separate department for Shia theology.

40 Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*, p. 25.

of descendants of the prophet. After rioting in 1907 and 1908, a government committee ruled that any attempt to turn tazia processions into a celebration in honour of the first four Khalifas was 'an innovation', and the recitation of 'Madhe Sahaba' was prohibited on three specific 'days': Ashra, Chehlum and 21st of Ramzan.[41]

Official attachment to the principle of the right of religious expression, alongside its commitment to the discovery of 'custom' in religious matters, helped to keep the argument alive, through vacillation.[42] The dispute nevertheless remained in abeyance until 1935, when, on Chehlum, Sunnis disobeyed the 'order' and recited the Madhe Sahaba. By 1936 verses were being recited every Friday for a period of three months, resulting in large numbers of arrests. A new government committee under Mr Justice Allsop and the Collector of the Jhansi Division set out to report on the possible modification of the 1909 ruling. Once again, government was hoist by its own petard. The new committee, which reported on 15 June 1937, decided that the Sunni recitations were allowable 'in theory', but were *actually* provocative and should be disallowed. After the publication of the Allsop Report on 28 March 1938 the Sunnis of Lucknow continually threatened civil disobedience if recitation were not granted.[43]

It was at this point that the Shia–Sunni dispute in Lucknow was complicated by the involvement of the Congress ministry. Both of the Muslim ministers in the new cabinet were Sunnis and therefore inclined to support the recitation of Madhe Sahaba. Before long, this fact obliged the Congress to offer theoretical support to the Sunni side. In November 1938, whilst Haig was on tour, one of the ministers, Hafiz Muhammad Ibrahim, issued a government press communiqué. The communiqué was interpreted as a promise by the government that they would, before long, allow a public recitation of Madhe Sahaba. The new encouragement to the Sunni cause finally persuaded Sunnis to launch civil disobedience from the beginning of March 1939. At a Council of Ministers meeting

41 Haig to Linlithgow, 18 April 1939, enclosure Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/102 IOR.

42 In 'practice', no recitation of the Madhe Sahaba was permitted from 1910. Yet in 1909 the Deputy Commissioner of Lucknow ruled that it was 'not entirely prohibited', leading to Shia agitation. The 1909 resolution of the government on the Madhe Sahaba dispute was typically vague and open to varying interpretations, allowing the dispute to arise again at a later date: 'The desire of the Majority of the Committee, which is entirely shared by the Lieutenant Governor, is to correct this abuse (i.e. converting a Muharram procession in commemoration of the martyrdom of Hussain into an untimely demonstration in favour of the first three Khalifas) without interfering beyond what is absolutely necessary with the right which the Sunnis of Lucknow share with all classes of His Majesty's subjects to express at suitable times and in suitable places the distinctive doctrines of their faith.' *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

on 22 March 1939 it was decided that the Sunnis should be allowed to hold a procession and meeting to recite the Madhe Sahaba on Barawafat Day each year. Within a week of the release of the communiqué, the Sunnis called off their civil disobedience.[44]

The precipitate Congress support of the Sunni side immediately raised suspicions in the minds of political observers. Suspicion of Congress motives was compounded by the involvement of the Muslim Congress minister Muhammad Ibrahim – already tainted in the eyes of Muslim Leaguers for having transferred his allegiance from the latter party to the Congress in March 1937.[45] It was also believed that the Congress had been simultaneously ingratiating itself with the Shia community in Lucknow, whilst patronising the (Sunni) Ahrar organisation under Maulvi Hussain Ahmad Madni. Official observers and the League painted the Congress alliance with the Shias as a cynical attempt to 'divide the Muslim community', which in the rhetoric of the Muslim opposition to the Congress became another example of Congress's 'Hindu Mahasabhaite' motivations. In a letter to Linlithgow, Haig commented 'that the trouble to begin with at any rate was in fact encouraged by the Congress in order to split the Muslims'.[46]

It was also believed that Congress's official support for the Sunnis was a method of capitalising on mass mobilisation to bolster its Ahrar support. At the end of August 1936 an 'All-India Madhe Sahaba Day' had overshadowed all the Palestine Day demonstrations, recording gatherings which verged on a thousand in Meerut, Allahabad and Aligarh. Congress attempted to retain its alliance with the Ahrars in the face of Muslim League–Ahrar animosity.[47] However, Congress's Ahrar support was never completely guaranteed when religious rhetoric was used to construct political activism. During Palestine Day the next year the demonstrations were sponsored jointly by the Anjuman Tahaffuz-i-Millat, the Majlis-i-Ahrar, the Ittihad-i-Millat and the Muslim League. Abdul Qaiyum, a leading Ahrar announced that if the Arabs declared 'jihad' Indian Muslims would do the same. The Ahrars aligned themselves with organisations like the Ittihad-i-Millat which, in August 1937, demonstrated against the Hindus of the Kanpur municipal board, who had refused to grant licences to Muslim butchers. At the end of November 1937 the Ahrars had protested against the music of a Kali procession as it passed a mosque, leading to a communal riot in Aligarh. Congress's approaches to both Shias and Sunnis were made to appear like a 'Hindu'

[44] Haig to Linlithgow, 18 April 1939, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/102 IOR.
[45] Pant to Nehru, 20 July 1937, in *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, vol. VII, p. 193.
[46] 'Shia–Sunni trouble', Haig to Linlithgow, 18 April 1939, L/PJ/7/2587 IOR.
[47] PAI 5 September 1936; 5 June 1937.

plot to split Muslim solidarity. During Palestine Day in Allahabad, another town where a range of Muslim organisations had united, Muslim shopkeepers raised protests against the shouting of 'Bande Mataram' by Congressmen involved in the demonstration.[48]

The swing from outright Congress support to degrees of ambivalence on the part of the Ahrars, as well as Shia political organisations, made Congress's actions and decisions in relation to Madhe Sahaba all the more sensitive and politically decisive. The Ahrar–Congress alliance fuelled League complaints about Congress attempts to divide Muslims, especially when the Ahrars were championing Madhe Sahaba recitation.[49] In contrast (and for its own internal reasons) the UP League was somewhat aloof and silent about the Shia–Sunni trouble in Lucknow. This added to Shia estrangement from the Congress after the March 1939 decision. Yet the UP Congress might have taken advantage of possible Shia support through the Shia Political Conference, which was extremely wary of the Muslim League. In 1945, the All-Parties Shia Political Conference was to reject the idea of Pakistan, on the assumption that the separate political and religious rights of Shias would not be protected in a Sunni-dominated state.[50] But after 1939 leading Shias claimed that it was 'difficult for any Shia to remain within the Congress fold'.[51]

In this atmosphere, Congressmen's continued appeal to languages of politics which evoked religious identities could help to validate Muslim League claims, as was shown in the activities of Balkrishna Sharma in Kanpur in the late 1930s. In the early 1930s, Sharma had promoted emotive religious rhetoric in support of civil disobedience.[52] In 1939 he was once more implicated in communal controversy. In May 1939 Hindu Sabhaite criticism of the Congress ministry and its supposed 'Muslim bias' had reached a climax, and was supported by a number of Congressmen. In Kanpur, Sharma took the lead in this agitation, provoking Haig's description of him as encouraging 'both communism and communalism. At the moment he seems to be trying to mobilize Hindu discontent against the Ministry.'[53] Given the importance of the city of Kanpur as the largest city in the province, any pronouncements by Sharma on the subject of Muslim divisiveness would surely have damaged Congress's game of a cross-communal appeal. On 20 November, during a Muslim League meeting in Kanpur, Mohammad Farooq threatened the Ahrar

48 PAI 28 August 1937; 25 September 1937; 13 November 1937.
49 Khaliquzzaman also expressed this sentiment. *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 213.
50 *The Moonlight*, 27 October 1945, vol. VIII, no. 16, L/PJ/8/693 Coll.117/E7 IOR.
51 *Ibid.* Article by Syed Ali Zahar, L/PJ/8/693 Coll.117/E7 IOR.
52 See chapter 5, pp. 183–4.
53 Haig to Linlithgow, 9 May 1939, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/102 IOR.

leader Alu Uddin, leading to an Ahrar demonstration in front of the Muslim League mosque. The following day, Balkrishna Sharma released a press statement, in which he warned the citizens of Kanpur about communalism, with 'special reference' to the League–Ahrar dispute. The following week, the League was successfully using Palestine to enhance its following in Agra and Shahjahanpur. In Kanpur the 'communal tension' talked of by Sharma had become Hindu–Muslim: Hasrat Mohani, himself an ex-Congress leader, led a Muslim demonstration in criticism of the Congress, provoking a near riot between Hindus and Muslims. Another Muslim ex-Congressman from Kanpur, Maulvi Karan Ali, made a speech at the Bara Masjid in Jaunpur, claiming that he had left the Congress because of its Hindu nationalist inclinations.[54]

The Congress ministry's apparently partisan handling of Madhe Sahaba in 1939 seemed to vindicate the sense of betrayal expressed by Muslim ex-Congressmen. This was a critical point at the end of the Congress ministry period and on the eve of world war and the important League Lahore Resolution. Madhe Sahaba, combined with the activities of key Congress figures such as Balkrishna Sharma and the suspicion that Congress aimed to disrupt 'Muslim unity', served to weaken Congress's claim to represent more than just Hindu opinion. There had always been pockets of Ahrar ambivalence towards the Congress in places like Kanpur, Ballia, Gorakhpur and Gonda. After 1939, Muslim support for the Congress appeared even more insecure. This was partly the result of a distrust of Congress motives in handling Muslim issues. It appeared to many Muslim leaders that a single united Muslim party would better represent such issues – an important motivation for the desertions from the Congress of Hasrat Mohani and Chaudhuri Khaliquzzaman.[55]

The fact of Congress's provincial power after 1937 meant that its every move would be analysed and interpreted by opposition parties – especially those with a communal agenda. However, it was not the case that the failure of coalition between Congress and League actually produced the polarisation of politics along the lines of community in UP. Neither was it the most important spur for Muslim politicians describing Congress power as 'Hindu Raj'. The changes in politics at the level of the ministry

[54] PAI 4 December; 11 December 1937.

[55] Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, pp. 159–64. Khaliquzzaman noted that Nehru believed the communal problem existed only in the minds of a few Muslim intellectuals, whilst a large number of these leaders themselves believed that it was a popularly based sentiment. According to Khaliquzzaman, the conditions for the League to go into a coalition was the ability to vote over communal questions. Khaliquzzaman saw his move over to the League as a matter of 'duty'. 'My own analysis of the present situation is that increased mass consciousness in the people of the province finds channels for its activities more in harmony with their past lives, i.e. religion': p. 183.

and the province are important in an understanding of the organisational and institutional success of the Muslim League: the League was forced to compete with the Congress for the Muslim masses once it had been rejected in the coalition negotiations. The disintegration of the National Agricultural Party into communal blocs after 1937 was also important in the consolidation of the League's landlord base.[56] But none of these events fully explain why League communal propaganda eventually gave the party overwhelming electoral success in 1946. Neither does it explain why the label for Congress of 'Hindu Raj' actually stuck. By 1937 the Congress had already placed itself in a difficult position with UP Muslims and it had done so by the manipulation of religious rhetoric and identity throughout the decade. The symbolic image of the Congress as a 'Hindu' party had struck a chord with varying groups of Muslims who had experienced the differences between national and local methods in Congress mobilisation. This difference between national and local, too, was part of the same process whereby the UP Congress had come to rely upon a dialogue of religious symbols, drawing on the essential tolerance of Hinduism, in its attempt to create an all-encompassing national politics. This helps to explain the inability of Congress to deal effectively with a communal issue like Madhe Sahaba. It also provides an indication of why on-going Hindu–Muslim tension became a political liability for the ministry – a theme that will be examined in the next section.

'Political riots': Hindu–Muslim conflict and Congress power

The formation of a Congress ministry from 1937 placed the UP Congress Party in a unique position. Increased popular support was now accompanied by new ministerial and administrative responsibilities. The ministry was inundated with a plethora of conflicting demands from groups who sought access to this new form of power and patronage.[57] The Congress had always been an arena for political organisation – a way of linking local concerns to those of the province and nation. Now it also had to carry the burden of administrative responsibility and satisfy the demands of those groups who sought redress for localised grievances through legislative and executive action. In this unique scenario Congress's methods of dealing with Hindu–Muslim disturbances, and the possibility of local Congress figures' involvement in the tension, acquired a new sensitivity.

[56] Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics*, pp. 175–6.
[57] This was demonstrated in the Ahrar backing of Congress during the Madhe Sahaba dispute.

Hindu–Muslim tension in local contexts severely weakened the bargaining position of the ministry, and by extension the Provincial, District and Town Congress Committees,[58] as they attempted to satisfy the specific demands of Muslim organisations affected by the riots.

Communal riots could have serious implications for Congress's provincial and all-India political ambitions. Their description in the late 1930s as 'political' – a term coined by Chaudhuri Khaliquzzaman for the '31 riot in Kanpur – seemed appropriate to contemporary observers.[59] Hindu–Muslim conflict eluded answers and solutions, as it still does today, largely because of the multilayered nature of its causation. In most Hindu–Muslim conflicts of the 1920s and 1930s, identifiable localised themes were involved: the existence of a disputed area of land; the sensitivity of a particular mosque or temple or the over-exuberance shown at religious festivals. But there were also preconditioning 'atmospheres' which led observers to conclude that violence was almost inevitable.[60] Localised disagreements between Hindus and Muslims could remain dormant, or simply irrelevant, until something in the public eye made them seem important for the security or wellbeing of a particular group.

Muslim League claims that Congress represented 'Hindu Raj' created just such a precondition for conflict. Much as individuals like Nehru would have liked Hindu–Muslim conflict to reflect nothing more than the deranged and reactionary clash of religious extremists, the occurrence of Hindu–Muslim conflict in the late 1930s invariably involved symbolic depictions of the Congress. It was stressed in the last section that the symbolic meaning of Congress's nationalism was often as important to Muslim views of the organisation as specific material grievances. Similarly, in 1936, it was Congress's use of a Hindu idiom that helped

[58] Relatively little research has been done into the communal riots of the late 1930s and 1940s. Yet they link quite clearly into the political negotiations at provincial and all-India levels. They helped to disrupt Congress's Muslim mass contacts campaign at the centre and affected Congress's bargaining position with Jinnah. This could work against the League as well as the Congress. The Calcutta riots of 16–20 August severely constrained Jinnah's plans for a controlled and ordered 'direct action' movement. Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 215–17.

[59] Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 73. Khaliquzzaman's analysis of the riot was not shared by all other witnesses. He highlighted the Bhagat Singh hartal, along with the cloth boycotts and over-exuberance of Congress activity as the leading causes of conflict. Other observers emphasised the essentially non-political factors, such as the build-up of religious antagonism as a result of shuddhi or the existence of bands of hired goondas. Statement of S. M. Raza, Honorary Magistrate and Municipal Commissioner, 'Kanpur Enquiry Report', p. 365, L/PJ/7/75 IOR.

[60] Some witnesses believed that during the 1920s riots could come out of the blue. O'Donnell, acting Governor of UP in 1926, wrote that communal disturbances sometimes occurred in places where there was no reason to anticipate trouble. S. O'Donnell to Irwin, 14 October 1926, Irwin Papers MSS.EUR.C.152/20 IOR.

to provoke Hindu–Muslim conflict. The linkages between religious symbolism and communal antagonism in this period of the late 1930s can be most clearly seen in the example of Kanpur. In the last week of August, Congress had deliberately made use of the Janmastami festival for purposes of propaganda in Kanpur. In the same week, communal relations deteriorated in the city. At the beginning of September 1936, Jawaharlal Nehru was 'worshipped' in an arti in the city. The following day at Patkapur Muslims complained about the use of Sanskrit words in Congress meetings and how it indicated that Congress was infusing its appeal with Hinduism. Within the next month the articulation of Muslim demands in relation to the Kanpur municipality resurfaced. Zakir Ali arranged a meeting in which people shouted declarations of support for the Shahidganj mosque agitation and called for the enhancement of Muslim rights in the municipality.[61]

Congress's attempts to enhance its propaganda drive in 1936, leading up to the elections, involved a political style which appeared to contribute to Hindu–Muslim tension. In Allahabad, Muslim League and Congress processions clashed, leading to more protracted quarrels. In Agra, during Bakr-Id in 1937, the movement to 'boycott Hindus' resurfaced with new vigour. By the end of March 1937 there were communal riots in Aligarh, Agra, Basti, Budaun, and Jhansi. In Dehra Dun, Congress workers, including Kedar Nath, were involved in the provocation of Hindu–Muslim trouble over cow slaughter. Whilst communal clashes continued into April in these districts, the gurukul at Kangri organised meetings in which 'Congress saints' were eulogised and Congress's victory in the elections was talked of in terms of a 'great Holi which would end all civilisation'. Also, in the immediate aftermath of the 1937 elections at Sultanpur, attacks on Muslims followed on from an attempt by fifteen Congressmen to persuade a Muslim (unsuccessfully) to join their organisation.[62]

Undoubtedly cow slaughter, music before mosques, municipal affairs and commercial competition all played a role in some of these conflicts. Yet Congress's Muslim supporters, when discussing Hindu–Muslim violence, often talked of the Muslim fear of Congress domination. In Allahabad, Abul Kalam Azad addressed a meeting of Muslims in an attempt to win them for the Congress. He stressed the point that the Congress didn't want to 'absorb all religion and culture'. His emphasis on the point clarified the message that Hindu domination and absorption was a central fear immediately after the elections.[63] This was strengthened by

[61] PAI 5 September; 12 September; 17 October 1936.
[62] *Ibid.*, 13 February, 16 March, 13 March, 27 March, 3 April, 17 April 1937.
[63] *Leader* (Allahabad), 8 May 1937.

the opinions expressed that Congress had no real minority programme, that they were 'making Muslims slaves' and that they were ignoring the cultural differences of Muslims.[64] The Muslim press in UP echoed this sentiment. *The Sunrise* commented in June: 'If the mass of the Indian Muslim minority had nothing to fear from the Hindu majority, could the communal leader have leapt into existence at all?'[65]

Hindu–Muslim conflict continued well into the ministry period. Reports from the Banaras region claimed that tension continued to increase after the election.[66] In Allahabad, Muslim shopkeepers protested against Congress shouts of 'Bande Mataram' during 'Palestine Day', once more making a link between the kind of symbolism used during civil disobedience and communal conflict.[67] Sometimes these protests were more explicit: an all-India Muslim League procession in Lucknow described its aims as 'anti-Bande Mataram'. The Muslim League in UP appeared to be focusing its political weight on popularising the idea of the ministry's fundamental 'Hindu character'. When Pant visited Kanpur on 10 November 1937, Dr Abdul Samad organised a Muslim protest meeting. Then, when Pant received addresses from the Kanpur district and municipal boards, the Muslim members absented themselves. Throughout the city a Muslim shopkeepers' hartal was set up. The opposition to Pant's Congress ministry could be articulated at a popular level precisely because the League had evidence of Congress religious symbolism to draw upon. As Pant was addressing municipal commissioners in the industrial city, in nearby Hardoi town Muslims protested against the early morning songs in the prabhat pheries of twenty Congress workers. In the next week at Kanpur a Congress sympathiser, Babu Ragho Das of Gorakhpur, distributed leaflets advising the public to oppose cow slaughter. The day after the distribution the city was disturbed by a sudden Hindu attack on Muslim butchers.[68]

As well as the more general accusations of 'Hindu bias', the Muslim League was still able to bring comparisons between the Congress and Arya Samaj to the public mind. The League used its press to link the anti-Islamic Pritinidhi Golden Jubilee at Nauchandi, Meerut, to the ministry.[69] Linkages with religious extremism were facilitated by the continued use of Hindu rhetoric. In January 1938 the Congress was

64 PAI 29 May 1937.
65 Extract from *The Sunrise*, 'Political Notes', 19 June 1937, AICC file 48/1937 NMML. *The Sunrise* sympathised with Muslim nationalists who in the main supported Congress.
66 Muslims of Banaras to Pant, 10 April 1939, GAD Box 603/604 file 67(3)/439 UPSA.
67 *Leader* (Allahabad), 23 September 1937.
68 PAI 20 November, 27 November, 4 December 1937.
69 *Al Aman*, 4 January 1938 (translated for the author), AICC file 60/1937 NMML. The Urdu League press did its utmost not only to highlight Congress's 'Hindu Raj' but to

associated with the utterances of one Swami Shahjahanand, who addressed a Faizabad audience, calling on youth to 'take a bath in the Ganges of revolution'. Neither was Congress able to stop the escalating accusations of Gandhi's partiality over the cow-slaughter question, which circulated in Gorakhpur in early 1938. The resulting communal tension during Bakr-Id in the district could only have been expected. In this connection, Ganpat Sahai became a target of both Muslim League fury and Congress concern.[70] The Bakr-Id disturbances of 1938 were to have a knock-on effect for communal tension throughout the south-eastern part of the province: Basti, Gonda, Kheri and Sultanpur districts all witnessed retaliatory Hindu action in the aftermath of cow slaughter. In Sultanpur a group of Hindus made a show of putting pig meat into the mouth of a Julaha. The communal controversies continued into the Holi festival at Allahabad, Pilibhit, Aligarh, Muzaffarnagar and Hardoi.[71]

The League in UP was also able to make political capital out of the earlier association between the Congress and the Arya Samaj on issues of social reform. In February 1938 Jinnah's remarks about the ill-treatment of untouchables within the Hindu fold were deliberately calculated to provoke an excessive response. At Atrauli, Hindus who had objected to the League leader's remarks took untouchables in a procession. At Gorakhpur, Basti, Aligarh, Bareilly and Hardoi the issue also helped to create a mutual Hindu–Muslim 'social boycott'. The political advantage to be made by Congress's early associations with the Samaj and the language of Hindu social reform was made even more explicit in a speech by Maulvi Muhammad Shah Khan Qadri on 20 March: he accused Gandhi of communalism by claiming that the Mahatma had indirectly promoted shuddhi and sangathan by 'idolising' Swami Shraddhanand.[72]

From 1937 the UP Provincial Congress was placed in an extremely awkward position in relation to communal conflict.[73] Pant himself was

twist and distort political issues with a potentially communal dimension. For example, the press statement of Mohammad Sher Khan's resignation from Congress was made to look like communal discrimination. 'Jhansi Cry in Vain', AICC file 60/1937 NMML.

[70] Sunder Lal Gupta to Jawaharlal Nehru (date not included), AICC file 24/1939 NMML. Ganpat Sahai was not only responsible for stirring up controversies surrounding cow slaughter, he also opposed Congress candidates in Sultanpur district board elections, and was punished under section 193 for 'moral turpitude'.

[71] PAI 12 February; 2 April 1938.

[72] PAI 26 February; 5 March; 2 April 1938.

[73] Congress was not only criticised from the communal platform, but also by groups which believed popular government could never solve law and order problems. The Nawab of Chhatari wrote of the riots of 1939 that 'the unfortunate communal bitterness in UP filters down to the rest of the country as UP is the centre of Muslim culture' and explained the increase in violence as the result of the 'disappearance of official prestige' and 'zamindari influence'. Nawab of Chhatari to V. Patel, 13 May 1939, Papers of Nawab of Chhatari NMML.

fully aware of this problem. When a Muslim League member of the Assembly, Zahiruddin Faruki, moved a motion in March 1938 to discuss the failure of the government to maintain law and order in towns disrupted by communal conflict, Pant described League complaints as 'destructive and uncharitable'.[74] The main focus of opposition to the ministry was an accusation of Hindu bias. It was continually necessary for both the ministry and the PCC to maintain the appearance of secular nationalism. Pant had included two Muslims in his cabinet. From 1937 attempts were made to approach the Muslim 'masses' on the basis of purely economic issues. Yet the gulf between the Congress's popular image and UPPCC instructions was wide.[75] Moments of Hindu–Muslim conflict emphasised this division. It was well known that the manipulation of communal passion was a keenly used tool in the building of electoral support. Events in Agra, Aligarh, Basti, Budaun and Jhansi, where riots or threats of violence were used in March 1937, supported the theoretical link between communal conflict and electoral activity. From this position it was a small step for Congressmen working in the districts to justify the use of festivals such as Holi and Janmastami, or exploit feelings about cow slaughter during Bakr-Id for political propaganda, as occurred in Gorakhpur in 1938 and 1939. Because Congressmen had also used religiously sensitive subjects to ideologically depict the nation itself, Congress involvement in communal conflict could, at times, appear to be part of a political agenda rather than political method. Disappointed by the largely Hindu administration, Muslims affected by riots in UP localities easily connected such conflict with the 'Hindu Raj' image of the Congress Party conjured up by the Muslim League.

The Muslim mass contact campaign in UP

Any analysis of Congress attempts to build Muslim support from March 1937 has to bear in mind the nature of the League's propaganda against Congress's claims to represent all Indians. It was on this front that Congress approaches to Muslims were stymied. The Muslim mass contact campaign, set up at the Congress Working Committee meeting at Wardha in March 1937, succeeded in reinforcing urban-based Muslim intelligentsia support for the Congress. However, it failed to make headway

[74] *Selected Works of Govind Ballabh Pant*, vol.VIII, pp. 104–7.

[75] Note in form of skeleton speech, 14 April 1939, GAD Box 603/604 file 67(3)/439 UPSA. This speech related to the Banaras riot of 1939, for which G. B. Pant had prepared a very detailed exposition of provincial government policy in relation to communal tension. This apparent care over Hindu–Muslim tension seemed to contradict the press image of Congress complicity in communal tension at local levels.

into the hitherto untouched areas of potential Muslim support in UP. A central reason for the movement's limitations was the self-destructive nature of its propaganda. Historians have pointed to the contradiction in mass contacts which, on the one hand, attempted to assert the unity of the economic interests of Hindus and Muslims, but which, on the other, mobilised separate communal identities. The simple fact that the *Muslim* masses were being specifically approached undermined the spirit of mass contacts.[76] This was an approach that encouraged League apologists to claim that Congress attempted to whitewash UP political opinion with its own supposedly 'Hindu' majoritarianism.[77] The failure of the Muslim mass contact campaign also related to a lack of real organisation and interest in the localities of UP, as Hasan has pointed out.[78] But it is also necessary to delve behind the reasons for these structural failures. The methods of the campaign played into the hands of League propaganda. The contradictory position, in which Congress appeared to both justify League accusations of Congress political domination and rely on ideas of the 'separate' interests of Muslims, opened the floodgates for communal recrimination. Muslims were encouraged to point out the situations in which, as Muslims, their positions and authority had been undermined by a supposed 'Hindu' front of Congressmen. The publicity office of Muslim mass contact, run by Muhammad Ashraf, was inundated with complaints of this nature, from Muslims who felt hard done by – excluded from power in the Congress, or ousted from local bodies. The opinions of embittered Muslim ex-Congressmen like Hasrat Mohani were publicised anew, precisely at a time when the Congress hoped to undermine League hyperbole.

Muslim complaints about exclusion from power and office are supported by the interpretations of historians attempting to explain separatism in UP. In one view, separatism was the product of a declining Muslim elite struggling against a popular democratic nationalist party which just happened to be overwhelmingly non-Muslim.[79] However, this interpretation does not consider the extent to which Congress

[76] Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contact Campaign', pp. 2273–80; *Leader* (Allahabad), 25 April 1937 – Jawaharlal Nehru reportedly declared that: 'to think in terms of communal groups functioning politically is to think in terms of medievalism . . . we think of them [the masses] not as religious units but as suffering units of the hungry Indian masses who cry loudly for succour'. But Nehru also admitted that the appeal was being made to *Muslim* masses now 'because we have rejected them in recent years'.

[77] Khaliquzzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 178. The Congress policy of using Congress Muslim candidates in by-elections was, Khaliquzzaman claimed, the same policy which the Hindu Mahasabha had attempted to achieve indirectly.

[78] Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contact Campaign', p. 2279.

[79] Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, pp. 119–82.

contributed to the communalisation of politics. As soon as Congress publicised its attempts to accommodate itself anew with 'Muslims', complaints against the Congress easily became communal. Ashraf himself made repeated comments, after assessing the nature of Muslim complaints coming into his office, about the need to prevent the continued moonlighting of Congressmen within 'communal organisations'.[80]

The Hindu–Muslim riots, as was seen in the last section, provided an ideal atmosphere for the repudiation of Congress claims to represent a unified Indian political community. Congress's attempts to coordinate the interests of all communities – the cornerstone of Muslim mass contacts – could be represented as an attempt to destroy the separate creed and 'culture' of Muslims. A year into the campaign, in May 1938, the Urdu press under Muslim League control was making the most of the Holi riots in Allahabad. The riots were not only supposedly 'engineered' by Hindus. They also reflected, according to the Urdu press, the tendency of Muslim mass contacts to manufacture artificially a single homogeneous Indian body politic. Speaking at Aligarh Muslim University, Fazlul Huq, the leader of a party that had relied upon cross-communal alliances in Bengal, made the cutting remark that 'The Mussulmans have suddenly and aimfully realised that they are treated not only with indifference but also with contempt. They complain that they have been thrown to the wolves . . . I am convinced that the nationalism of the Congress merely and positively means Hinduism and Hindudom.'[81] A League propagandist, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, made a series of speeches after the Allahabad riots, using the carnage to argue that there could be no accommodation with the Congress along the lines of mass contact until Congress accepted the separate existence of a distinct Muslim nation in India. In fact, he claimed that Muslim mass contacts simply represented an attempt by Brahmans to devour the Muslim community.[82]

Religious conflicts and riots seemed to emphasise the powerlessness of Muslims within the Congress and publicised the position of Muslim leaders alienated from the Congress in earlier periods. One such figure was Hasrat Mohani. In a speech at Calcutta in September 1937, Mohani was heard to use the highly communal rhetoric which now characterised so many League gatherings – a significant departure from the early 1930s. Comments were made about the lateness, inadequacy and effrontery of the Muslim mass contact campaign. He held that Congress had in fact acquiesced in the formation of a government as a way of enhancing 'Hindu

[80] Ashraf to Saksena, 3 September 1937, AICC file 30/1937 NMML.
[81] *The Star*, 3 May 1938 (translated for the author), AICC file 60/1937 NMML.
[82] *The Star of India*, 30 April 1938 (translated for the author), AICC file 60/1937 NMML.

power and influence'. It was therefore of no surprise to Hasrat Mohani that the Calcutta Khilafat Committee had imposed several conditions on its siding with Congress: stop the 'attacks' on the Muslim League, disband Muslim mass contacts, and dismiss Muslim ministers 'who are an affront to Muslim public opinion'.[83]

The reaction of Hasrat Mohani to the Muslim mass contact campaign reflected a widespread tendency in UP to use the new Congress admission that it had 'neglected Muslims' as a licence to twist the communal knife. If Ashraf was to take his role as publicity organiser seriously, he needed to counter Urdu press accusations that local Congressmen had worked in alliance with the Hindu Mahasabha to oust Muslims from positions of power. To do this, he was required to investigate the situations in which the accusations had been made. From the third quarter of 1938, Ashraf's office became a new centre for the fielding of complaints about Hindu communalism which, when investigated, only served to strengthen the hand of the Muslim League. As has already been demonstrated, well into the late 1930s connections between Congressmen and organisations like the Arya Samaj remained, which could be used to demonstrate the Hindu nationalist bias of the Congress. Left alone, these connections would have had a simmering influence on Hindu–Muslim relations in each local context. Once Ashraf and the mass contact office started its investigations, and received complaints with sympathy, their provincial importance was magnified. Investigation could have been beneficial. But it was taking place in a context of Congress power, at a time when complaints could be related not only to Muslim exclusion from Congress movements but exclusion from political power. Moreover, through the Muslim Mass Contacts Office, the contradictory position of the Congress was emphasised in terms of its continued local alliances with Hindu institutions alongside provincial pronouncements of secularism.

In March 1938 a whole catalogue of complaints poured into the publicity office from Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Saharanpur, Aligarh, Moradabad and Bulandshahr. In the first four of these districts, vociferous allegations about the 'excesses' of the Congress government over the cow slaughter question were spattered across the Urdu press. The *Aftab-e-Hind* of Aligarh continued to summarise, under twenty-three headings, the various forms of excesses supposedly committed by the government on Muslims. In Bulandshahr and Moradabad there were more specific accusations of communal behaviour. It was discovered that in Congress offices communications were never issued in the Persian script. Membership

[83] Ashraf to Pant, 5 March 1938, AICC file B-9/1938 NMML.

forms, leaflets, handbills and circulars were also exclusively printed in Hindi. There was a general complaint that the national flag song was almost unintelligible to many Muslims, and that it was necessary to select a committee to find songs acceptable to both communities. Finally, it was reported that prominent members of the Hindu Mahasabha held responsible positions in Congress organisations.[84] Interestingly, it was as much the issues of a symbolic significance as of material importance that characterised these complaints. Although the main thrust of historical comment on Muslim rejection of the Congress has focused on Muslim dissatisfaction with the exclusion from office and power, in an analysis of complaints it is apparent that rejection of the Congress was also repeatedly related to the national 'image' of the organisation.

There were, however, references to political representation and power. The complaints from ex-Congress supporters are the most illuminating. At the end of July 1938, for example, a report from a correspondent on the *Asia*, a pro-Congress newspaper from Agra, complained that the Congress government had been highly unsympathetic to the Muslim industrial population of Firozabad, since it had failed to offer any support to leather and glass bangle manufacturers. Many complaints related to levels of Muslim representation in Congress bodies. For example, during the political conference in Jaunpur in 1938, comments were made to Ashraf from Congress Muslims about the under-representation of their community in the Rural Development Department. Other districts followed this up with remarks that the Rural Uplift Department conducted all of its business in Hindi, with no Urdu translations.[85] Also common were declarations of political disappointment. Nehru received one letter from one Idris Khan of Budaun, which claimed that, in spite of twenty years of continual membership of the Congress, he had never been allowed to stand for the Provincial Congress Committee, and that propaganda was repeatedly used against his political cause. By the beginning of 1939, the UPPCC had received numerous complaints from Muslim Congressmen about the numbers of Muslim delegates at political conferences, as well as proportions on Congress Committees. Perhaps most revealingly of all, some Muslim Congressmen picked up on the nationalist symbolism used during Tripuri Congress session: Aftab Ahmad of Jubbulpur complained that the literature of the Congress there was '90 per cent Hindi Sanskrit'. All the slogans on the gates to the pandal were given 'Hindu' names,

84 Ashraf to Mahabir Tyagi, 5 March 1938, *ibid.*

85 Ashraf himself was highly aware of how these issues could easily be picked up and blown out of proportion by opponents of the Congress: 'As we are situated today, almost any flimsy ground of complaint is exploited by the communal press.' Ashraf to the Director of Rural Uplift Department, 15 August 1938, AICC file 30/1937 NMML.

and local Hindu Mahasabha leaders were permitted to join the reception committee.[86]

In the face of these vociferous communal accusations, it is not surprising that the mass contacts campaign was implemented with increasing caution and circumspection. Mushirul Hasan has pointed to the general indifference to the campaign as its ultimate death-knell, hinting that there existed a section of 'right-wing' Hindu politicians firmly entrenched in the Congress machinery in certain key districts.[87] A similar hands-off attitude had allowed the Provincial Congress to permit localised associations between Congressmen and Hindu communal organisations. In a practical sense Hasan's assessment is undoubtedly accurate. There did still exist a strong Hindu 'right wing' in important districts in UP. But the inability of the Provincial Congress to overcome these cadres as a whole suggested that their ideological influence was still strong. Mass contact organisers were afraid to rock the boat. Khan Bahadur Bashiruddin, manager of the Islamia School, Etawah, was requested to accept the presidency of the Muslim Conference on 15 May 1937, to consider ways and means of bringing Muslims into the Congress. However, it was decided that it would be unnecessary to invite any Muslims 'other than Congress supporters'.[88] Rather than face the League's communal propaganda head-on, mass contact organisers attempted to avoid it, perhaps theorising like Nehru that to deny its validity or existence would negate it. Not inviting a head-on battle with the League also prevented the ignition of latent Hindu nationalist sympathies from Congress Hindus who might have been reluctant to support Muslim contacts.

However, because the organisers of mass contact felt the need for circumspection, groups of Muslims who might have been won over to Congress in different circumstances interpreted the apparent apathy with suspicion. In 1946 Mohammed Inayatullah made a detailed assessment of the failures of the movement. He admitted that the Congress ministry had already 'put suspicion and fear into the minds of Muslims', but that many people still did not understand why the Muslim mass contacts were effectively given up. The effect was disastrous: 'This Congress apathy created a very bad impression on the Muslim mind and they began suspecting Congress motives.' Inayatullah believed that Muslim youth

[86] Jawaharlal Nehru to Keshav Deva Malaviya, 12 January 1939; Aftab Ahmad to Ashraf, 17 January 1939, *ibid.*

[87] Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contact Campaign', p. 2279. Aligarh and Budaun are highlighted in this respect, as well as the Bundelkhand by-election in which 'the Congress right-wing worked against Congressmen like Sherwani'.

[88] Organisers of the UP Muslim Congressmen's Conference, Allahabad. Statement to the press, AICC file 12/1937 NMML.

felt effectively 'neglected by the biggest national organisation' and as a result could find 'no other outlet than the Muslim League for [their] political outflow'. For Inayatullah the Congress apathy towards Muslims related to the Hindu belief that Muslims would never compromise their faith for the sake of patriotism; that in order to be a true patriot it was actually necessary to be a Hindu too, although this was never fully admitted. Inayatullah drew the interesting conclusion that the 'Hindu' attitude could be explained by the deep history in which Hinduism was able to absorb all visitors to India before Muslim rule, but thereafter failed.[89]

Here was another exposition of the UP Muslim idea that Congress, almost against its own better intentions, was unable to escape the logic of the political languages that had created its sense of Hinduism and the 'Hindu community' as something ultimately tolerant, absorbent and cosmopolitan – a force which would passively accommodate India's Muslim population. Blindness to the implications of how these political languages combined meant that the UP Congress could not tolerate the idea that religious differences should define political allegiances. As a result, the Muslim complaints surrounding Muslim mass contacts had to be minimised. Ashraf's office was placed in an insoluble dilemma. A thorough attempt to remedy Hindu–Muslim controversies in different towns and districts would, it was shown, ignite a powder keg of other communal recriminations. This could only support the League strategy in the short term. On the other hand, Ashraf also highlighted some unpleasant linkages between Congressmen and Hindu communal organisations, which appeared to distort the Congress philosophy and its claim that it stood for tolerant national integration. Perhaps the most damaging revelations of all came out of Gorakhpur in June 1938. There, Congress Muslims complained of the involvement of key Congressmen of the district in highly aggressive Holi processions. The activists included the already mentioned Kedar Nath, who reportedly 'criticized the prophet of Islam in a language which clearly brought him under 153 IPC [Indian Penal Code]'.[90] By setting out to reach 'Muslim masses', the Congress was displaying all the skeletons in its cupboard.

The shortcomings of the mass contact campaign also reached into the publicity itself. Amazingly, no coordinated and complete bulletin of the Muslim press in Urdu was organised until 1946. Attempts were made in 1938 to keep up with the opinions of the Urdu press and encourage nationalist Muslim views. But the plan was never fully implemented. In fact,

89 Mohammed Inayatullah to Dr Balkrishna Keskar, 14 July 1946, AICC file G-23/1946 NMML.
90 Ashraf to Abul Kalam Azad, 27 June 1938, AICC file 30/1937 NMML.

Ashraf faced repeated difficulties in the procurement of papers.[91] Three months into the campaign, the organisers of Muslim mass contact were also short of working capital to fully implement a publicity drive. When the managing director of the Modern Press of India suggested setting up an Urdu weekly supporting Congress views, Ashraf immediately replied that the project would have to be funded by individuals and could not be subsidised from Congress coffers. In a number of cities and districts where Congress desperately needed to improve its position amongst Muslims, publicity by leaflet or newsletter was in any case simply not enough. At the end of May 1937 the distribution of pro-Congress leaflets at the Juma mosque reportedly had no political effect.[92]

More alarming was the inability of Congress members at a district level to take the campaign seriously. On 10 July 1937 Ashraf was compelled to write to the president of the District Congress Committee in Agra to suggest that his office should take more interest in the legal defence of Muslims arrested for rioting offences. The riots had occurred during Ashraf's own election. The significance of Congress indifference was made clear: 'I hope you will realise that any indifference shown in this matter will react very adversely not only on my prospects but on the general reputation of the Congress amongst the Muslims of the rural areas.'[93] The discrepancy between the intentions of the Provincial Congress and District Committees or individuals could therefore undermine the single-mindedness of the campaign. In other districts, the activities of Congress members shortly after the beginning of the campaign were even more damaging. For example, in Kheri district in the first week of May 1937 a Congress leader named Baldeo Lal helped to organise a Hindu sangathan sabha in the village of Mitauli to boycott Muslims. At Mathura, in the same week, a Congressman, Jyoti Shankar Dixit, took charge of money collections for an anti-cow-slaughter campaign.[94]

Despite the forced circumspection and lack of organisation limiting the Muslim mass contact campaign, the League was still able to represent the movement as an attempt to disrupt a supposed 'Muslim solidarity'. The aim of the UP Congress Committee to integrate Muslims into the party was paralleled by League sympathisers with earlier Hindu sangathanist

[91] Ashraf to Post Master, Head Office, Allahabad, 20 August 1938, AICC file 30/1937 NMML. When, in August 1938, the delivery of Urdu newspapers was inadequate, Ashraf complained that the papers were not being received by his office regularly. He suggested that an enthusiastic member of the post office staff might have been reading them.

[92] PAI 12 June 1937.

[93] Ashraf to the president of the District Congress Committee, Agra, 10 July 1937, AICC file 11/1937 NMML.

[94] PAI 15 May 1937.

attempts to absorb Muslim cultural difference. Perhaps one of the most revealing and condemning assessments of the campaign involved criticisms of the national song – 'Bande Mataram'. In response to an article printed in the *Times of India* on 30 July, Ali Bahadur Khan pointed out that the 'Hindu' element of the song was an intrinsic part of Congress's 'political culture'. He described the quasi-religious nature with which it was performed, with hands folded and heads bowed. Given the obvious Hindu cultural and religious implications of 'Bande Mataram', Khan asked, could the song be seriously considered as a *national* anthem? He went on to point out 'to the mass contacts committee in particular' that the song was in fact derived from religious Sanskrit mantras.[95] This view was supported by a Muslim writing for *The Civil and Military Gazette*. 'Bande Mataram' originated as a hymn, sung by a character in the writing of Bankimchandra, in which a Hindu hero sets out to overcome Muslim rule in Bengal. Within the novel are references to the liberation of the 'Mother' from Muslim rule. At one point, the main characters enter a temple in which, alongside images of Vishnu and Lakshmi, is Saraswati, with an image of 'the Mother' in her lap. Darshan is offered to this personification of the Hindu nation, by the recitation of 'Bande Mataram'. The writer goes on to say:

> The context of the story entirely excludes the idea of the 'Mother' being interpreted as the common motherland of all Indians, Hindus, Muslims and others. She symbolizes the motherland only as representing the culture, religion and political history of Hindus exclusively . . . It is a typical illustration of the psychology of a very large majority of Congress leaders in India that, when they address a public meeting about the necessity of separating religion from politics, they open the proceedings with this song.[96]

One Urdu paper in Lucknow described the mass contacts campaign as 'another name for the political shuddhi of the Muslims'.[97] Congress advances towards Muslims were represented in one graphic account as being like the spider tempting the fly into his parlour, so that: 'One . . . is forced to the conclusion that the end of the Congress policy though by a circuitous route, is ultimately bound to be the same as that of the Hindu Mahasabha – viz. that the Muslims should walk into the parlour of Hinduism and be swallowed up.'[98] It was considered particularly apt by this paper that Gandhi should have concerned himself with the solidarity of the Hindu community through his fasts in 1932 and 1933, but

95 *Al-Hilal*, 1 August 1937 (translated for the author), AICC file 60/1937 NMML.
96 'The "Bande Mataram" Song: A Muslim View', *The Civil and Military Gazette* (Lahore) 12 October 1937 Aziz, *Muslims Under Congress Rule*, pp. 141–5.
97 *The Light*, 24 October 1937 (translated for the author), AICC file 60/1937 NMML.
98 *Ibid.*, 1 November 1937.

that there was nothing wrong in 'sowing the seeds of discord' among Muslims.[99] Another Urdu paper went to the extreme of criticizing Muslim mass contacts by claiming that Congress could never hope to attract Muslims when speakers like Jadva Acharya Thakur called for the extermination of Muslims from the face of India.[100]

For an observer like Haig the failure of Muslim mass contacts seemed inevitable. Haig viewed the mass contacts policy as a 'departure' from a more sensible (in his view) attempt to conciliate the Muslim League. The departure from that Congress policy was described as 'a big mistake', since it seemed obvious to the Governor that 'had they entered into a coalition, I cannot help feeling that Muslim solidarity would soon have been undermined'. In contrast, attempts to integrate Muslims into the Congress only strengthened communalism and separatism: 'More and more the Muslims have come to regard themselves as a separate nationality, and I do not think at this stage those ideas and that organisation are going to be disrupted by economic policies.'[101] Certainly, the timing of the campaign could not have been worse. The years 1937 and 1938 were bad for Hindu–Muslim relations in the cities of UP, and the Muslim League looked for every opportunity to exploit its theory of 'Hindu Mahasabhaite' tendencies behind every Congress move, especially after its disappointment in the elections.

The period of the Congress ministry was an important phase in the escalation of communal politics in the United Provinces. The number of riots described as 'Hindu–Muslim' increased throughout the province after 1937. The extent and nature of the League's communally based complaints placed the Congress organisation in a unique position, particularly in the context of its added administrative responsibility.[102] However, it would be inaccurate to suggest that Congress–League negotiations surrounding the 1937 elections were the primary factors in Congress's on-going inability to attract Muslims. Whilst there was nothing historically inevitable about the UP Congress's failure amongst Muslims in this period, the success of the League's 'symbolic' accusations of 'Hindu nationalism' owed much to Congress's traditional methods of political mobilisation outlined in previous chapters. Muslim fears of absorption and loss of 'minority' status were clear from comments about 'Bande Mataram' and through the forms of complaints coming to Ashraf. Essentially, these related to concerns about the meaning of Congress

[99] *Ibid.*
[100] *The Star*, 25 June 1937 (translated for the author), AICC file 60/1937 NMML.
[101] Haig to Linlithgow, 3 June 1939, Haig Papers MSS.EUR.F.125/100 IOR.
[102] Kesavan, 'Communal Politics', pp. 41–5.

secularism. Due to the mixture of political languages and ideologies, some of which stressed traditional 'Hindu' forms of state tolerance, Congress secularism was ambiguous in the 1930s and 1940s. Indeed, as was seen in chapter 4, it appeared equally likely that local Congress leaders would ally with institutions such as the Arya Samaj. This continued attachment of key Congress figures to such organisations has to be explained as well as demonstrated. The League was able to reject mass contacts, make use of communal antagonism, and pick up on symbolism surrounding the nation, precisely because Congressmen had already made religious rhetoric and ideas a fundamental part of activists' perceptions of India in the early 1930s. 'Bande Mataram', Vidya Mandir, national flags, cow slaughter and the suppression of Urdu, whilst publicised in new ways in 1937, were only effective League propaganda because of these associations with an earlier nationalist symbolism. Congress's jealousy of political power in 1937 is an explanation for Muslim League opposition. Muslim *alienation* can only be sufficiently explained in the context of Congress's methods of depicting the nation. This was a long-term process. Its effects did not make Muslim alienation inevitable, but it certainly limited the political options of the UP Congress in the 1940s.

7 Congress, Pakistan and volunteer militarism

From 1940 political activity in UP was thrown into a new turmoil with the appearance of the Muslim League's Lahore Resolution and 'Pakistan' demand. Historians have largely downplayed the effect of the idea of Pakistan on popular politics throughout India, either because the boiling pot of 'communal politics' has been sited in the 1920s and early 1930s, or because there has been a focus on all-India politics in this decade.[1] Revisionist accounts of the 1940s and Partition have pointed to the 'game' played by Jinnah to set up the Lahore Resolution as a bargaining counter to qualify himself as 'sole spokesman' of Muslim India: a position which was not necessarily matched by popular enthusiasm for the idea of a separate Muslim state.[2] On the other hand, the idea of 'Pakistan' itself became a common theme in mass gatherings in 1940s' UP, in meetings of support and opposition. Although Jinnah's strongest landlord and urban professional support came from UP,[3] Muslim League appeal was not confined to elites.

This chapter will investigate three themes in relation to UP popular politics in the face of the new League demands in the 1940s. The first two deal with the implications of Congress's on-going 'Hindu' image for its Muslim support and the degree to which the UP Congress was directly associated with the programme and activities of the Hindu Mahasabha. The third investigates how far the Congress and Muslim League in UP

[1] Gyan Pandey, David Page, Sandria Freitag and Norman Barrier have all highlighted the 1920s and 1930s as a crucial turning point in Hindu–Muslim relations in UP. On the other hand, Kesavan has emphasised the popularity of the Pakistan demand, explaining it in terms of a simple way out of the 'minority' community dilemma: 'the enthusiasm for the Pakistan demand in the United Provinces was partly because the two-nation theory allowed these politicians to repudiate the impotence of minority status and claim parity'. Kesavan, 'Communal Politics', p. 38.

[2] Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p. 57; Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, pp. 53–133.

[3] Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, pp. 75–6. Hasan points out that the Muslim League was dominated by landlords in the early 1940s in UP, under the leadership of Nawab Jamshed Ali Khan, Nawab Muhammad Ismail Khan of Meerut, Nawab Muhammad Yusuf of Jaunpur, the Raja of Pirpur, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan and the Rajas of Mahmudabad, Jehangirabad and Nanpara of Oudh.

were pushed into engagement with more extreme, communally motivated forms of political activity by the increased militarisation of mass movements. In order to understand and explain the changing nature of communal violence and the appearance of military-style organisations alongside political parties, the context of the 1940s' colonial state at war is absolutely crucial. Articulation of the Pakistan demand opened the eyes of Muslim groups supporting the Congress to the power of religious identity in political mobilisation. It will be argued that continued Muslim alienation from the UP Congress also related to the on-going logic of some Congressmen's attachment to the idea of a Hindu nation, and that this helps to explain the popular base of support for the League in UP. Yet in the form and style of this new adversarial politics, we see a transformation from the symbolic idioms of the 1930s to forms of rhetoric which were based on a reading of global and imperial developments.

The last chapter, in line with other works,[4] has demonstrated how the elections of 1937 ushered in a new phase in Hindu–Muslim relations in UP. However, emphasis on 1937 as a critical turning point minimises the momentum of communal politics in the 1940s. With a few exceptions,[5] relatively little has been done on the growth of the League, its change of direction and the reactions to the 'Pakistan' demand (especially from the point of view of Hindu nationalism) in specific provincial contexts. In UP the popularisation of 'Pakistan' was intimately tied into Congress's relationship with militant forms of Hindu mobilisation. It has already been shown how the Congress's ability or failure to manoeuvre between potential groups of Muslim support was connected to the long-standing Congress association with 'Hindu' political languages. This idea of the Hindu nation was a popular motif moulded by three characteristics: firstly the reactions of Muslim groups attempting to rationalise what they saw as a homogeneous, aggressive Hindu political elite. Secondly, it was generated by the concrete ideological commitments of certain Congressmen. Finally, it was the result of dialogic languages of politics, which constrained and made ambiguous the quality of Congress secularism. Over time the Muslim League campaign to associate the Congress with Hindu nationalism became entrenched. This happened because there still existed sufficient evidence at the district and town level (in the form of communal conflict and religious associations involving Congressmen) to support the League argument. Muhammad Ashraf's publicity office at the centre of the Muslim mass contact campaign repeatedly unearthed

[4] Hasan, *India's Partition*, pp. 15–25.

[5] The most important is Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–1947* (Cambridge, 1994).

this evidence in the closing years of the 1930s. Most importantly, the UP Congress did nothing to effectively counter-balance this Hindu nationalist image. The symbolism of the Indian nation was still regarded as important: issues like that surrounding 'Bande Mataram' were regarded as evidence that the Congress never fully severed itself from languages of the Hindu nation which had played such an important role in the early 1930s. In this context the explicitly communal methods of the League were related to and were affected by claims that Congress could still be related to 'Hindu' institutions in the 1940s.

Looking at official Congress activity appears to suggest the opposite. By the early 1940s the Provincial Congress seemed to have officially severed itself from institutional attachments to the Hindu Sabhas. In UP the Sabha found a new lease of life even though it was unable to translate the popularity of its message, delivered at conferences and rallies, into a new mass membership. It was explicitly critical of Congress. It represented the front line of political opposition to the 'Pakistan' demand. Yet its growing influence apart from the Congress, alongside the RSS from 1944, did not induce Muslim groups such as the Majlis-i-Ahrar and Jamiat-ul-Ulema to strengthen their ties with secular Congressmen. In fact, the opposite occurred. The Congress as an organisation was even more vociferously associated with the Mahasabha, despite the fact that Sabhaites fiercely contested Congress's 'right' to 'represent Hindus' at its mass meetings. This was partly the result of the League's directly communal propaganda – a problem repeatedly referred to by Nehru.[6] However, it will be seen that it was also related to the difficulties Congress experienced in distancing itself from Hindu idioms in the province. By 1943 some sections of the Sabha in UP led by Maheshwar Dayal Seth continued to proclaim support for the Congress. The RSS also maintained a relationship with certain Congress leaders, as has been seen in chapter 5.

Certainly these overlapping influences again played a part in the continued failure of the UP Congress to improve its Muslim support. However, relationships between Congress Committees in the districts and organisations of fluctuating support, such as the Majlis-i-Ahrar and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, were determined by more than just the now tenuous connections with institutional Hindu nationalism. Opposition to the Pakistan demand in UP helped to build up a momentum of 'Hindu' opposition in the province, in which the communal pronouncements of organisations

[6] Nehru to Nawab Muhammad Ismail Khan, 10 November 1937. Nehru believed the League complaints to be totally manufactured. Correspondence of Jawaharlal Nehru, November 1937–April 1938 NMML.

associated with the Hindu Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj played an important part. For key figures amongst the Ahrars and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Hindu reaction to League demands, and the fact that the Hindi press had described Jinnah's politics as a nefarious call for a separate 'Pakistan',[7] were of greater general concern than the immediate and new popularity of the Hindu Mahasabha. For Abdul Qaiyum, leader of the UP Majlis-i-Ahrar, it was sufficient reason to break support of the Congress. This break and similar flights from the Congress cannot be explained purely by the dictates of political opportunism. This chapter will investigate the relative importance of three factors that help to explain these Muslim reactions to the Congress: the fear of minority status, reactions to Congress's relationship to Hindu nationalist rhetoric and organisations, and the significance of the momentum of communal conflict.

Pakistan in the popular politics of UP: Congress's fluctuating Muslim support

Some historical arguments about UP politics in the 1930s and 1940s emphasise the consistency and depth of Congress's elite Muslim support, in particular from organisations such as the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Shia Political Conference, the Firangi Mahal and the Ahrars.[8] The poor response to Muslim mass contacts, the ways in which the idea of Pakistan was received in the province, and the growth in popularity of the Hindu Mahasabha as the champion of the anti-Pakistan movement, however, cast a question over this Muslim backing of the Congress. An important Ahrar leader, Abdul Qaiyum, was to alienate himself from the Congress in 1941 and become a propaganda maestro for the Muslim League. The Moradabad Jamiat-ul-Ulema was increasingly to oppose the Congress as the decade progressed. Alongside the defections of Muslim leaders, the apparent mass enthusiasm for the 'Pakistan' rallies in important pockets of the province contrasted with poorly attended meetings of Congress's Muslim mass contact.

Ayesha Jalal and Mushirul Hasan link the gradual popularisation of the League to the necessity of maintaining a spokesman for Muslim interests at the centre. This is indisputable in the context of high politics, yet the idea that a spokesman for community interests should be necessary at all in UP is still an open question. Given Hasan's stress on the degree

[7] Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, p. 58. Jalal points out that the Lahore Resolution made no reference to 'Pakistan' at all. In fact, Jinnah maintained that the 'Hindu press' had 'fathered this word [Pakistan] upon us', p. 71.

[8] Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contacts Campaign', pp. 2279–80.

of Muslim intelligentsia support for the Congress in UP it is difficult to explain the relatively rapid growth in League popularity without relating the Pakistan demand to more popularly based minority grievances. The ambiguous and wavering nature of Congress's popular Muslim support in the 1940s was fundamentally linked to its political image. This was not just the result of League hyperbole, in which the Congress ministry was accused of pro-Hindu bias. It was in part accounted for by the previous decade in which, as was demonstrated in chapters 2 and 3, Congressmen in UP both associated themselves with Hindu communal organisations and were party to a religious rhetoric: an interlinked mesh of political languages for purposes of popular support. But there was nothing inevitable in Muslim estrangement. The identity of political interests between Congress and League in the mid-1930s suggests that the communal polarisation set in motion in the 1940s might have been obstructed.[9] In the 1940s the Lahore Resolution and consequent Pakistan demand placed the Congress and Congress supporters in a new and ambiguous position. The Hindu Sabhas and RSS, who supported the idea of India's territorial integrity, championed opposition to Pakistan. Congressmen were hard placed to distance themselves from this sentiment. Although the UP and All-India Congress organisations had officially repudiated Hindu communal organisations in 1938, many Congressmen called for a strong stand against Muslim separatism. The message of the Hindu Sabhas was both ideologically attractive and highly populist. At the same time, the apparent strength of the League's Pakistan propaganda, especially in cities like Lucknow and Kanpur, placed extra pressure on the Congress to establish its own anti-Pakistan identity, pushing it ideologically towards the Hindu Sabhas and RSS. As Hindu–Muslim tension increased in 1946 and 1947, members of the RSS were also keen to exploit the political popularity and organisation of the Congress for their own agendas.

Apart from altering party political allegiances in UP, the Pakistan demand and its response opened up new areas for debate in the province about the place of religion in political life. By 1946 the idea of Hinduism as a peaceful, essentially tolerant and all-embracing force in Indian culture and politics was gradually displaced in some nationalist circles by a more militant communal identity, which saw Hinduism as a vulnerable culture.[10] This shift can be identified in the writings of Tandon

[9] Muslim League presidential address of Wazir Hasan, Bombay, 11 April 1936, *Indian Annual Register* (Calcutta, 1936), vol. 1, pp. 294–5. Hasan styled the 1935 constitution as 'a monstrosity', strongly reflecting the views of the Congress.

[10] Chatterji, *Bengal Divided*, pp. 166–85. There were some similarities here with Bengal. Chatterji points out that questions of culture, religion and identity for the Hindu

and Sampurnanand, as well as in the more obvious Savarkarite Hindu Mahasabha.[11] Some Congressmen, who had been ardent opponents of 'communalism' in the mid- and late 1930s, seemed to accept the inevitability of a political world in which communal identity would serve a short-term purpose in the face of the League's propaganda. Crucially this marked an ideological break from Gandhian catholicity. There was a good response from Congressmen and some district Congress Committees in UP to Tandon's explicit opposition to Gandhian ahimsa and the need to organise a Hindu defence corps, which would protect nation, community and language.[12] Algu Rai Shastri, Mahabir Tyagi, Acharya Narendra Dev and Balkrishna Sharma also seemed responsive to this new enthusiasm for communal defence.[13] The communal dilemma not only affected political strategies; it had a fundamental effect on ordinary life in UP. Social life was informed by the political environment as never before. Non-political societies and cultural journals began to talk in terms of a fundamental religious division, rather than the ideal of a composite nation.[14] For some this led to reaction; the experience of the 1940s prompted discussions not only about 'political freedom' but also 'religious and cultural freedom'. There were discussions in the press and public meetings about the need to maintain cultural and religious purity – to maintain 'Bharat' over 'Hindustan'.[15] The call for Pakistan and the response to it had prompted a new, highly aggressive defence of these intangible parts of national life. Paradoxically, League popularity in UP prompted a reaction among the literate Hindu public which elevated the defence

bhadralok merged into a wider preoccupation with nationhood on the basis of increasing anxiety.

[11] Sampurnanand demonstrated a greater concern for the protection of Hinduism's cultural and philosophical purity in his later writings from the 1960s. Sampurnanand, *Evolution of the Hindu Pantheon*, pp. 80–102.

[12] Tandon Papers, file 93, 3 August 1947, NAI. Well before the organisation of the Hind Rakshak Dal, Tandon had been advocating the abandonment of ahimsa. Fortnightly Reports for the first half of April 1945, 19 April 1945; first half of October 1945, 22 October 1945; second half of November 1945, 6 December 1945; second half of January 1946, 5 February 1946. Frampton Papers, 'Confidential Report on Political and other Conditions in the United Provinces, from March 1945 to November 1946', SAS.

[13] See Chapter 5, pp. 180–87.

[14] The journals *Madhuri, Cand* and *Vishwa Bharat Samachar* all exhibited a definite shift towards the interpretation of literature and culture in terms of religious community by 1946.

[15] Debates in Hindi papers and journals focused on the transcendence of ideas such as a 'national language' over the ebb and flow of political events. Language was bigger than the individual and no person, not even leaders like Tandon and Gandhi, had the right to distort Hindi. This public despair and rejection of political life reflected a deep-seated malaise in which political figures were blamed for a mass hysteria centred on a dream of communal separation. *Madhuri*, vol. 6, no. 274 (January 1947); *Abhyudaya*, 6 June 1947.

of religion, language and culture to new levels, implying new sets of communal identifications to compete with those generated by the League.

All of these pressures in public life and civil society – the growth of communal militarisation and movements for the protection of language and culture – help to explain the development of popular support for the Muslim League in UP. Direct evidence is provided by the momentum of League and Congress mass meetings dealing with the subject of Pakistan. Recent historiography holds that Jinnah's 'Pakistan demand' represented a bargaining tool at an all-India level,[16] yet the response to Pakistan at a popular level in UP was impressive. The ability of the Muslim League in UP to organise mass demonstrations contrasted starkly with the largely Hindu gatherings that attempted to implement Congress's Muslim mass contacts. The strength of the League's 'Pakistan Days' encouraged the Hindu Sabhas to organise parallel meetings in response.[17] In Kanpur the building-up of enthusiasm for Pakistan and the development of Hindu Defence Committees impacted on municipal politics in which, in 1940 and 1941, a 'United Hindu Front' attempted to restrict the activity of a Muslim executive officer and vice-chairman.[18] The first major 'Pakistan Day', on 19 April 1940, was celebrated in the main cities of UP with large meetings. Agra, Allahabad, Fatehpur and Lucknow each had gatherings of around 2,000. At Kanpur the audience numbered approximately 10,000. The theme of speeches at Kanpur involved heated condemnation of the Congress as a 'Hindu organisation'. In Lucknow this initial enthusiasm paid off. On 27 and 28 April the UP Muslim League Working Committee reported on the enrolment of further League members throughout the province, especially in the provincial capital, and the opening of Urdu schools in the city. A large meeting in Shahjahanpur on 28 April at which Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan gave an audience of 4,500 an exposition of the Pakistan scheme followed up the success of the 'Pakistan Day'. Another large 'Pakistan' meeting on the same day was organised in Jhansi, which 2,000 people attended.[19]

The success of some of these meetings meant that the League was gradually able to gain the support of hitherto independent Muslim volunteer associations like the Khaksars. In Kanpur and Dehra Dun, by the early 1940s, the League had successfully won over the Khaksars: in

[16] Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 2–5.

[17] In some of the larger UP cities this created an atmosphere which had a dramatic effect on all levels of political life.

[18] *The Citizen Weekly* (Kanpur), 4, 10 October; 22 November 1941.

[19] This encouraged hyperbole: Chaudhuri Khaliquzzaman boasted at a district conference of the Muslim League, in Kanpur on 18 May, that the Muslim community of India would soon 'beat the achievements of both the British Empire and Gandhi'. PAI 27 April, 11 May 1940.

Dehra Dun, the Khaksar leader Nawab Bahadur Yar Jang compared the position of Muslims in India to that of the Jews in Germany. On 26 May Sundar Akhtar Begum headed a meeting in Sitapur district in which the wavering Khaksars again pledged their support to the Muslim League. In response, the Hindu Sabha there organised a 'Bundelkhand Hindu Raksha Dal'.[20] At the end of December the Khaksars of Meerut also decided to approach Jinnah for an alliance with the Muslim League. By the end of 1940 the provincial Muslim League already had the confidence to issue an explicit condemnation of all Congress attempts at satyagraha. At the annual Provincial Muslim League Conference, held in Allahabad between 24 and 27 December, Begum Habibullah declared that Muslims would not tolerate any civil disobedience on the part of Congress.[21]

'Pakistan Day', celebrated on 23 March 1941, was observed in every district of the province. In Allahabad and Moradabad Muslim League communal rhetoric was rampant. But the largest and most exuberant celebrations were witnessed in Kanpur. Jinnah visited the city and was welcomed by a crowd of several thousands, interspersed with organised sections of the Ittihad Millat and the Khaksars. Jinnah's speeches referred to Congress's 'ulterior motives' for power and talked of organising the Muslim League like an army.[22] A correspondent wrote of 'the unparalleled enthusiasm' of the city's Muslim community on the visit of Jinnah. Nawabzada Liaqat Ali Khan chaired the reception committee, and made a speech in which he boasted that Muslims would never submit to a central Indian government, as that would entail the enslavement of the entire community.[23] The 'anti-Pakistan Day' riots which followed at the end of the month were an indication of both the influence of 'Pakistan' on the fears of Kanpur's non-Muslim communities and the degree to which UP's largest city was always prone to violent conflict.[24]

Given the scale of the 'Pakistan' celebrations in Kanpur, Lucknow and Allahabad, the apparent increase in mass support for the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League witnessed by CID and official reports is not surprising.[25] Compared with the mid-1940s, higher League membership figures in 1940 to 1941 for UP were reflected in mass meetings. The Allahabad city membership was 11,009 in 1940–1, and had dropped to

[20] PAI 31 May 1940; Proceedings of the UP Hindu Sangathan Committee, 1940, All-India Hindu Mahasabha Papers file P-13/1940 NMML.

[21] APS 4 January 1941. [22] *Leader* (Allahabad), 30, 31 March 1941.

[23] *The Citizen Weekly* (Kanpur), 5 April 1941. [24] *Leader* (Allahabad), 28, 29 April 1941.

[25] APS 29 August 1941; Minute by the Police Department 26 June 1941 L/PJ/8/683 IOR. This minute talked of the militant tone in Hindu Mahasabha calls for mass volunteer organisation and the popular response which it would be likely to create.

2,000 in 1943–4. In Kanpur the figure of 16,000 in 1940–1 dwindled to 11,264.[26] However, in the early 1940s, the outward demonstrations of the League in the major cities were large enough to provoke a resurgence of communal organisation. This inevitably affected Congress's own Muslim support. As early as December 1939 the Shia Political Conference at a meeting in Chhapra had declared that the Shias should remain independent of both the Congress and the Muslim League.[27] On the other hand, the Majlis-i-Ahrar continued to condemn Pakistan at its meetings in 1940, and this manifested itself in sectarian conflict at Sitapur and Kanpur. At the beginning of 1941 the position of the Ahrars had been shaken by the change of heart of one of its most influential leaders. On 22 January it was decided that the Majlis-i-Ahrar would offer satyagraha, but on a different basis from the Congress. By the beginning of February it was reported that Wasi Ahmed had failed to ignite province-wide civil disobedience among the Ahrars. The sting was yet to come: Abdul Qaiyum, a respected Ahrar leader, publicly condemned the Congress for its 'indifference to the claims of the Ahrars'.[28]

Even more revealing of the Ahrars' loss of faith in Congress principles was the response to the 1941 census. As the census approached, League and Hindu Mahasabha meetings increased in number to stress the need for enumeration. An Ahrar meeting in Allahabad echoed this trend, voicing the opinion that Ahrars should be sure to represent themselves as Muslims.[29] The movement of Muslim groups to the Muslim League could therefore also relate directly to minority status fears irrespective of Congress actions. However, mobilisation for the Muslim League was regularly juxtaposed to the 'Hinduism' of the Congress. At a meeting in Kanpur, Abdul Qaiyum re-stressed the need for Ahrars to assert their Muslim identity, and members of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema joined him in this appeal. In the same period Madni had reportedly refused an offer of Rs.50,000 to persuade the Jamiat to offer satyagraha alongside the Congress.[30] Once again, in the political atmosphere created by the polarisation over 'Pakistan', appeals to religious identity could draw Muslim support away from the Congress.

The lack of Ahrar enthusiasm for satyagraha may well have reflected the shift in the allegiance of Qaiyum. In Moradabad, the local Ahrars

[26] Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, pp. 110–11. The figures for Lucknow were different, showing an increase from 4,000 to 31,180 between the two periods, perhaps due to the presence of highly influential League leaders in this city with a relatively tight control over the organisation – figures such as Khaliquzzaman.

[27] Article by Syed Ali Zaheer, *The Moonlight*, 27 October 1945, L/PJ/8/693 Coll.117/E7 IOR.

[28] APS 29 January; 6, 14, 21 February 1941.

[29] *Ibid.*, 14 February 1941.

[30] *Ibid.*, 21 February 1941.

complained of a 'lack of outside help' in their agitation.[31] By August 1941 the Majlis-i-Ahrar in UP had experienced an internal split, as a section of the organisation completely forsook Congress policy and moved to the Muslim League. In the midst of this schism Abdul Qaiyum made a speech which quite clearly demonstrated his reasons for the change of heart: owing to the opposition of all groups of Hindus to Muslims, all groups of Muslims would have to join forces. According to Qaiyum the Ahrars had never rejected the idea of Pakistan and could just as easily have sided with the League as with the Congress all along.[32] In Bareilly one Ahsan Usmani, an Ahrar leader from Kheri, echoed this anti-Congress policy. By the end of the month Qaiyum had unequivocally pledged Ahrar support for the Muslim League. He chaired a succession of meetings at Bareilly, Agra and Aligarh, advocating the need for Ahrar–Muslim League cooperation and denouncing the 'pro-Hindu' policy of the Congress. In a peculiar echoing of Hindu Sabha rhetoric he declared that Gandhi's non-violence was a way of getting Muslims to show a similar 'cowardice' to Hindus.[33] By the end of the year Abdul Qaiyum was fully established as a League propagandist.

Equally alarming for the UP Provincial Congress was the weakening of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema. In the last week of April 1941, at Bijnor, there was a majority in a meeting of the provincial organisation against cooperation with Congress in satyagraha. At a meeting on 21 April, Maulana Ahmed Said explicitly condemned the 'anti-Muslim' attitude of the Congress, which he believed had manifested itself most clearly in Congress's attitude towards the Lucknow Madhe Sahaba dispute. On 22 April, the Awadh wing of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema meeting at Lucknow echoed this sentiment and accused the Congress of starting the Shia–Sunni trouble to deliberately divide the Muslim community.[34] At another meeting in Moradabad on 4 May, Abdul Quddus criticised the 'pro-Hindu' policy of Congress, and the Deoband Jamiat-ul-Ulema also joined the fray in criticising Congress over Madhe Sahaba. After Abdul Qaiyum had commenced his anti-Congress propaganda in earnest, a parallel development in the Jamiat-ul-Ulema had become clearly discernible. At a meeting in Saharanpur, League-like methods were uncharacteristically used. Reference was made to recent communal rioting at Jewar in Bulandshahr

[31] *Leader* (Allahabad), 18 March 1941.
[32] *Al-Hilal*, 4 August 1941 (translated for the author), AICC file 47/1940–1941 NMML.
[33] APS 29 August 1941. Ahimsa was rejected by Muslim organisations as well as Hindu. Tandon's Hind Rakshak Dal contained a number of references rejecting Gandhian non-violence: T. S. Sharma to Tandon, 22 June 1947; Kisan Lall Agarwala to P. D. Tandon, 4 July 1947, Tandon Papers, file 313 NAI.
[34] *Al-Hilal*, 25 April 1941 (translated for the author), AICC file 47/1940–1941 NMML.

district, and was used as an appeal to Muslims to unite.[35] By January 1943, the pro-Congress Madni faction within the Jamiat-ul-Ulema was in authority once again, but the episode had clearly demonstrated how the appeal for Muslim unity could work against the Congress, especially in political situations in which it was tempted to manipulate communal schisms, as in the Madhe Sahaba dispute.

Congress's loss of Muslim support should not be exaggerated. Leaders such as Madni and Bukhari retained their loyalty to the Congress. The Firangi Mahal, with the exception of a small section,[36] maintained its pro-Congress slant. The degree of Muslim support for Congress after Independence also suggested that there had always been an important potential Muslim voting bloc.[37] However, this support was not consistent, and in the exceptional circumstances of the Pakistan propaganda even the most loyal Congress supporters could be swayed by appeals to religious identity. The League's accusations about Congress's 'Mahasabhaite tendencies' provided a good enough pretext at least for political manoeuvring. Some Muslim parties in UP undoubtedly altered their allegiance to take advantage of the League's growing authority in negotiations at the centre. Nevertheless, the pattern of Muslim political alienation from the Congress in the 1940s in UP suggests that the concentration of historians on the decisions of elites and the League's landlord/urban professional support is insufficient. Organisations such as the Majlis-i-Ahrar, the Shia Political Conference and factions within the Jamiat-ul-Ulema obviously appreciated the new relatively strong position of Jinnah and the League. But the appeal of Muslim 'political parity' only made sense in the context of UP communal affairs, popular politics and the supposed evidence of Congress's 'Hindu domination' at localised levels. The wave of popular enthusiasm for Pakistan was difficult to ignore.[38] So too was the religious rhetoric accompanying it, which Congressmen had used in their turn to delineate their own vision of the nation. These images of the nation resonated for a variety of social groups in UP and the bases of their political support – as suggested by the mass meetings – could not be ignored. Neither could the sudden popularity of the Hindu Sabhas of UP

35 APS 23 May; 8 August 1941.

36 Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, p. 57, n. 9. Maulana Jamal Mian, a member of Firangi Mahal, invited Jinnah to inaugurate the 'Pakistan Club' and revived the *Hamdam*, a pro-Muslim League paper. He carried some of the Firangi Mahal with him.

37 Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State*, p. 146. In the 1950s, in most districts of UP, Muslims and Chamars offered the Congress major electoral support, although both communities were severely under-represented in the Congress organisation itself.

38 Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, p. 103, n. 2. Hasan cites the Canadian scholar W. C. Smith, who commented that the League had conquered the bulk of the middle and lower-middle classes by the mid-1940s.

in the 1940s and their apparent proximity to the Congress's own stance on Pakistan.

The Hindu Mahasabha and the demand for Pakistan

Inevitably the Lahore Resolution and the consequent change in League political tactics strengthened the hand of organisations that aimed to maintain the territorial integrity of 'Hindustan'. The Hindu Sabhas in UP had experienced mixed fortunes in the 1920s and 1930s, disappearing from the political scene almost entirely in the mid-1930s. With Pakistan on the political agenda of the Muslim League, the ideological message of Hindu nationalism took on a renewed significance. Principal Hindu Mahasabha leaders like Moonje stressed the need to 'arouse people to the gravity of the situation', and quickly planned the setting-up of Hindu militias.[39] Although, in the early 1940s, the Hindu Sabhas of Agra and Oudh (Awadh) were still strongly critical of Congress's supposedly pro-Muslim policies, as the decade progressed opposition to Pakistan touched a nerve more broadly within the Congress. Once again, as in the days of civil disobedience, Hindu rhetoric appeared both within and outside the Congress in UP. Leaders like Tandon and Algu Rai Shastri, as has already been seen, could be affected by the emotive significance of the threat of Pakistan. For Congressmen like them Pakistan helped to re-establish a sense of 'Hindu' national identity. By 1943 the Hindu Sabhas of UP, despite internal divisions and disorganisation, were at the forefront of opinion over the League's Pakistan demand, and once more shared Congress's popular support in the province.

It was seen in chapter 5 that the re-emergence of militant Hindu communalism was prompted by new stresses on military-style organisations. In their initial reactions to the Pakistan demand, the Hindu Sabhas of Agra and Oudh (Awadh) were also motivated by opposition to the principles of ahimsa. This accompanied a trend, which also existed within the provincial Congress, to organise trained militias. Condemnation of Congress's 'pro-Muslim' policy was allied with criticism of Gandhian principles.[40] The need for a 'strong Hindu militia' was urged at a divisional Hindu Sabha Conference in Agra at the end of March 1940. At a Hindu Mahasabha Conference in Bahraich, on 23 April, B. S. Moonje declared that the Congress's favouritism towards Muslims could be explained by an unnecessary attachment to the charkha and non-violence.

[39] Moonje to Malaviya, 17 June 1941, Madan Mohan Malaviya Papers NMML.
[40] Moonje to the Viceroy, 3 October 1940; Minute by the Police Department, 26 June 1941; Statement of V. D. Savarkar, 27 August 1941, L/PJ/8/683 IOR.

Instead, Hindus should have offered to help Britain in the war, so as to increase their political chances as a religious community. Within three months a number of 'Hindu Raksha Dal' organisations were set up under the auspices of the Sabha, the first appearing in Jhansi district.[41]

Although both the Congress in general and Gandhi in particular came in for heavy criticism in Hindu Sabha meetings, the press hints at the possibility of a new Congress–Mahasabha alliance through UP militarism certainly attracted Congress leaders in certain districts. By 1944 there was interest in the activities of the RSS.[42] Within the clique-ridden edifice of the Hindu Sabhas in UP there was also still room for a branch of Congress sympathisers. In October 1940 the Hindu Sabhas of Agra and Oudh (Awadh) were factionalised. The old 'ruling party' was headed by Raja Bahadur of Tiloi and Pandit Jyoti Shankar Dikshit. This group retained its loyalty to the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, and in particular Savarkar. A second group included J. P. Srivastava and Krishna Guru Narain and was led by Raja Maheshwar Dayal Seth. This clique aimed to set up an 'All-India Hindu League' to rejuvenate the political activities of the Sabha in UP.[43] Seth favoured a rapprochement with the Congress, a line that repeatedly brought him into conflict with Savarkar's anti-Gandhian proclivities.[44]

Maheshwar Dayal Seth provided a continual link between the Congress and Hindu Sabhas between 1940 and 1945, placing Muslim groups in a potentially ambiguous position in their relationship with Congress and Congressmen. The All-India Hindu Mahasabha had condemned Congress's ideals of non-violence and officially disassociated itself from civil disobedience on 22 November 1940.[45] Yet there were obviously Congress sympathies within the Mahasabha, which echoed Seth's position. At the November 1940 meeting of the Hindu Mahasabha the condition was added that the Working Committee reserved the right to join any national struggle that was 'not detrimental to Hindu interests'.[46] By January 1941 Seth's clique had taken over the reins controlling the

41 PAI 13 April; 4 May; 3 August 1940; Savarkar to Linlithgow, 2 October 1940, L/PJ/8/683 IOR. 'The political interests of the Hindus are on the whole allied with the British interests as never before'.

42 See chapter 5, pp. 196–7.

43 'UP Hindu Sangathan Committee', 12 October 1940, All-India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, file P-13/1940 NMML.

44 Chief Secretary's report for Central Provinces, December 1938, L/PJ/8/683 IOR. At the Nagpur annual session of the Hindu Mahasabha, Savarkar had strongly criticised the Congress governments and the nature of Gandhi's leadership.

45 'Assessment of the position of the Congress, Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League and Forward Bloc' (Hindi), November 1940, Baba Ramchandra Papers NAI.

46 APS 4 December 1940.

Sabhas. To overcome criticism of the All-India Mahasabha's divisiveness, the faction set up 'district councils of action' in order to enrol a further 5,000 members. Despite the disorganisation of the Hindu Sabhas themselves, Seth's more populist approach produced results. By April 1941 'direct action' rallies in opposition to Pakistan had garnered approximately 4,000 new members for the Sabhas. About half of the districts of the province experienced the exuberance of 'Anti-Pakistan Day' at the end of April 1941.[47]

The success of the Hindu Sabha rallies had a significant effect on Congress's Muslim support. Shortly after the 'celebrations' and riots of 'Anti-Pakistan Day', Jamiat-ul-Ulema criticisms of Congress's political motives surfaced, as was seen in the last section. In meetings at Moradabad on 3 and 4 May 1941, Abdul Quddus claimed that Pakistan was an inevitable outcome of the attitude of the Hindus. In the same week the Khaksars of Bara Banki, who had always wavered in their support of the League, made a formal alliance.[48] Previously, the Khaksars in this district had cooperated with Congress and had not shown signs of allegiance to the cause of Pakistan.[49] The overtly aggressive Hindu Sabhaite response to Pakistan was obviously once more being associated with the Congress. There were also correspondingly high membership levels for the Muslim League in the 1940–1 period: Muzzafarnagar district registered 6,050 members in these two years compared with 3,688 for 1943–4, and Banaras district boasted 4,000 members compared with 1,100 across the same two periods. Over half of the UP districts, where sufficient figures are available, illustrated this trend.[50]

Maheshwar Dayal Seth also saw the role of the Sabha as comparable to that of the Congress. This was illustrated in his reorganisation of the 'All-India Hindu League' on 17 and 18 August 1941. The Working Committee decided that the name of the League should be changed to 'National League of Hindustan' – a method of down-playing the communal character of the organisation in an attempt to attract wavering Congressmen.[51] The aims of the revitalised wing of the Sabha were also diluted in their

[47] *Ibid.*, 29 January, 7 February, 4 April, 2 May, 4 July 1941. Etawah and Lucknow had meetings of 1,000 each, Kanpur and Allahabad of 6,000. By July the province had been divided into twelve divisions for the purpose of sangathan work.

[48] APS 2, 9, 23 May 1941.

[49] Telegram to the Viceroy, 19 June 1941, L/PJ/8/683 IOR. The Khaksar move towards Pakistan was encouraged by the hard-line Hindu Mahasabha attitude, which urged government action against the Khaksars in 1940.

[50] Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, pp. 110–11.

[51] *Leader* (Allahabad), 20 August 1941. On the other hand, Seth had also represented the Bareilly Hindu Sabha on 10 March in a complaint against a Muslim executive officer – *Leader* (Allahabad), 22 March 1941.

outward appearance: the maintenance of India's 'territorial integrity', swaraj, and the promotion of political, cultural and linguistic unity on a national democratic basis.[52] Seth's 'National League' appeared to have been modelled on Munshi's 'Akhand Hindustan Front'.[53] The latter was conveniently touring UP during August 1941. An interview with Pant was arranged with the purpose of uniting 'all nationalist elements' in resistance to Pakistan. Once again Muslim League propagandists lapped up the apparent unity of Hindu nationalist interest. Abdul Qaiyum, the one-time Congress supporter and leader of the UP Majlis-i-Ahrar, made a speaking tour in Moradabad, Bijnor, Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar districts. Congress's satyagraha and Munshi's activities were lumped together. Qaiyum went so far as to claim that the 'Akhand Hindustan Front' had been formed with the 'consent' of Gandhi.[54] Not only were the links between Congress and Mahasabha mooted in an institutional and organisational sense by the moderate Seth, but, more importantly, they were noticed by Muslim groups.

Meanwhile, the Provincial Hindu Sabha stepped up its organisation of a 'Provincial Hindu Militarization Board'.[55] The president of the Hindu Mahasabha had represented the militarisation drive to the Viceroy as a declaration of the reliability of the 'Hindu race' in a situation of war.[56] But the movement obviously related to an anticipated civil war over Pakistan. On 15 and 16 September it was decided that the propaganda drive should be carried into the rural areas, 'particularly those inhabited by the martial classes'.[57] At a meeting of the Working Committee of the Provincial Hindu Sabha in Lucknow on 21 September, J. P. Srivastava suggested that members of the Sabha should make enquiries in their respective areas to ascertain interest in military enlistment.[58] Savarkar reported, in a statement to the Viceroy, that Mahasabha leaders were touring the whole of the subcontinent 'to whip up enthusiasm and spirit in the Hindu public [and] . . . set up "Hindu Militarization Mandals" throughout India'. There was a strong racial motivation to Savarkar's enthusiasm. Heroic 'Goorkhas, Sikhs, Jats and Rajputs, Mahrattas' were said to have joined the army in their thousands, contributing to the 'Militarization of

52 *Prakash*, 21 August 1941.
53 In the 1950s, K. M. Munshi was associated with Sampurnanand and Tandon in the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, p. 157.
54 APS 29 August; 12 September 1941.
55 A resolution was passed in Bombay on 10 March calling on all subsidiary Hindu Sabhas to form Militarisation Boards. *Leader* (Allahabad), 12 March 1941.
56 Savarkar to the Viceroy, 12 October 1941, L/PJ/8/683 IOR: 'I fervently hope that this opportunity of enlisting goodwill and active participation of millions of Hindu Sangathanists in the common cause of Indian Defence will not be lost.'
57 *Prakash*, 18 September 1941. 58 APS 3 October 1941.

our Hindu race'. Savarkar also admitted that if Hindus helped Britain militarily they would also be doing a service to 'Hindudom' – to 'defend our hearths in an internal anti-Hindu anarchy'. The statement concluded aptly: 'Let Hindus measure their swords with the bravest races of the world today.'[59] By the beginning of 1942 the new active approach of the Hindu Mahasabha had raised its popularity to unique heights. Hindu Mahasabha open meetings in December in Lucknow and Kanpur recorded audiences of 2,000 and 8,000 respectively.[60]

The new stress on 'Hindu solidarity', although often based on an aggressive form of racism, did not significantly deflect Hindu support for the Congress in UP. The nature of the factional split in the UP Hindu Sabha encouraged the Seth group to make political capital out of Savarkar's opposition to Gandhi. The 'old ruling' group remained loyal to the Mahasabha president into 1943, but Maheshwar Dayal Seth still harboured sympathies for the Congress and ideas for a political alliance.[61] By mid-March he had made a more definite break from the 'ruling' faction, planning to set up a pro-Congress 'active block' within the Sabhas in collaboration with Tribeni Sahai of Bareilly. He had support from the convenors of the Rohilkhand Hindu Conference in Bareilly (7–9 February) which declared support for the Congress by condemning Britain's communal favouritism. In the aftermath several Hindu Sabha meetings in the district actually conducted propaganda for Congress.[62] The drive of the Seth–Sahai group continued well into the monsoon season. At the end of August 1943 Tribeni Sahai was proposing a Hindu Sabha recruitment tour in Rohilkhand, Meerut and Agra divisions for September and October. By the beginning of November the Seth clique of the Agra Provincial Hindu Sabha reported that 83,000 primary members had now been enrolled. In a Working Committee meeting in Agra, Chandra Gupta Vidyalankar of Delhi appealed to the Congress to assist

[59] 'Statement of V. D. Savarkar Regarding Hindu Militarisation', 7 October 1941, L/PJ/8/683 IOR.

[60] *The Times of India* (Delhi), 30 December 1941; Report on volunteer movements, 4 November 1941, Police CID Box 82 file 1240/1941 UPSA. These figures at meetings seem to contradict official assessments of Hindu volunteer movements as relatively weak in 1941, until the Japanese invasions of December.

[61] Dayal Seth continued to attempt to forge alliances with Congress well into 1945. 'Confidential Report', Fortnightly Report for the second half of March 1945, 4 April 1945, Frampton Papers SAS – Seth attempted to reach an understanding with Rajagopalachariar; first half of September 1945, 4 October 1945 – Seth commenced negotiations with the Congress over the forthcoming elections.

[62] APS 12 February, 26 February 1943. At a Hindu Sabha District Conference at Jwalapur, in April 1943, amongst anti-Pakistan remarks it was claimed that if the Hindu Sabha had joined forces with the Congress, it would have won independence by now. *Ibid.*, 16 April 1943.

in the uniting of Hindus, so that Muslims could be justifiably afraid of 'Hindu Raj'.[63]

On the other hand, Seth's campaign for a Congress–Mahasabha alliance obviously damaged Congress's chances of extending Muslim mass contacts. By early 1942 important sections of both the Majlis-i-Ahrar and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema had broken away from the Congress.[64] At the end of February, organisations connected to the Muslim League were once more using the Congress–Hindu Mahasabha conspiracy theory. At the All-India Muslim Defence Conference in Gorakhpur on 23 February, for example, Nawab Sir Muhammad Yusuf, Nawab Mohammad Ismail and Dr Mani made speeches declaring that the recent Congress–Sabha 'alliances' showed that the Congress campaign was as much anti-Muslim as anti-British. In the same connection, a Muslim League meeting at Banaras on 24 March, 'Pakistan Day', criticised Congress's connections with Hindu nationalism.[65]

The Hindu Mahasabha, like the Congress, diverged in its provincial and district-level politics. The wave of popular support for anti-Pakistan demonstrations opened up speculation about a possible Congress–Hindu Sabha alliance to maintain the territorial integrity of India, despite the opposition of Savarkar. The success of Seth's group in 1941–3 suggests that there was a core of political opinion that responded to both the aggressive tactics of Hindu sangathanists and to Congress mobilisation. This was reflected in Congress-style nationalist propaganda at the 1941 Kumbh Mela, at which nationalist pamphlets were distributed linking idol worship to nation worship – a reflection of Congress tactics during civil disobedience.[66] There was therefore more to the Congress–Hindu Mahasabha relationship than the joint sympathies of a right-wing landlord element.[67] A pro-Congress clique in the UP Sabhas was able to exploit latent Congress support for its own ends. The Mahasabha leadership at an all-India level was certainly dominated by a conservative group, which hampered its organisational development.[68] However, by the 1940s, there was also a popular basis for the identification of interests between the

[63] Report of the Agra Provincial Hindu Sabha All-India Hindu Mahasabha Papers file P-25/1943 NMML; Seth to Vidyalankar, 5 November 1943, Vidyalankar Papers NMML; APS 3 September, 5 November 1943.

[64] See pp. 242–4. [65] APS 5 March, 26 March 1943.

[66] Candrasekharananda Avadhuta, *Suvko ka dharm*, 'Pamphlet issued during the Kumbh Mela' (Allahabad, 1941), PIB 134/1 IOR.

[67] 'Confidential Report', Fortnightly Report for the first half of November 1945, 20 November 1945, Frampton Papers SAS. It was noted that during the elections 'for practical purposes the Mahasabha and Congress are indistinguishable'; Fortnightly Report for second half of December 1945, 6 January 1945. In this report, defections from the Awadh Hindu Sabha to the Congress were noted.

[68] Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement*, p. 33.

Congress and Hindu Sabhas, particularly over the specific issue of a non-divided India.

Communal conflict and volunteer organisations on the eve of Partition

In 1947 most of the remaining props of intercommunal harmony fostered by Congress secularists collapsed. Following the gruesome Hindu–Muslim conflicts in Hapur, Meerut district, in 1946 and 1947, the UP Congress organisation unwittingly found itself the protector of 'Hindu interests'. It seemed that every aspect of life in the subcontinent had come to be dominated by the fear and speculation surrounding sectarian violence – a violence that permeated nearly every aspect of life.[69] It had become difficult, one political observer commented, to separate the political from the communal.[70] By the end of October 1946 even the speeches of a UP socialist like Jai Prakash Narain were claimed to be fostering Hindu–Muslim discord. Condemnation of the Muslim League was interpreted as condemnation of the Muslim community itself. Intercommunal classes and groups were forced to split along ideological and sectarian lines as never before. Novels, stories and diaries provide reports of how the conflict permeated personal lives.[71]

In the early 1940s it did not seem that the Pakistan demand would have a radical effect on the frequency of sectarian conflict. Occasions of festivals were still the most likely moments for possible disturbance. In February and March of 1940 there were the usual but quite sparse clashes during Mohurram and Holi, in Gonda, Aligarh, Allahabad, Banda, Moradabad and Kanpur. In July there were riots over a Rathyatra procession in Lucknow, and at the end of August in Bara Banki district there were attacks by Muslims on a Hindu Janmastami procession. The Holi riots were repeated in Gorakhpur and Azamgarh in 1941.[72] There was no

69 *Abhyudaya*, 9 June 1947. A letter by Kishori Das Vajpayee claimed that 'today, truth is under attack' and advocated the protection of 'samskrti' – 'culture' in all aspects of life.

70 *Leader* (Allahabad), 6 October 1946. Fortnightly Report for the first half of April 1945, 19 April 1945, Frampton Papers SAS.

71 Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, pp. 61–2. Hasan gives illuminating detail from a novel by Attia Hosain, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*: 'No one seemed to talk any more; everyone argued, and not in the graceful tradition of our city where conversation was treated as a fine art . . . In the thrust and parry there was a desire to inflict wounds.'

72 APS 2 March, 6 April, 20 July, 7 September, 1940; 21 March 1941. Police were taking the usual precautions over the Holi festival – *Leader* (Allahabad), 11 March 1941. For colonial observers the usual kinds of provocations occurred during festivals. Patrick Biggie, working in Gorakhpur, wrote that it was 'difficult for a good son of Islam to feel well disposed towards the opposite community while they are indulging in the excesses of Dasehra. The Hindus realize this and become as offensive as possible in

actual indication that communal conflict had become more severe in the early 1940s, which is surprising considering the number of well-attended meetings both for and against the Pakistan demand. There was nothing 'inevitable' in the pattern of rioting leading up to Partition. Indeed, it is striking how much petty disputes over festivals continued to act as the immediate cause for conflict. However, it will be seen that mass activity did take on more militant characteristics and this was to have serious implications for communal conflict.

Despite the lull of the early 1940s, the degree to which communal conflict was used as a political indicator became more pronounced as the decade progressed. The increased interest in 'Hindu militarisation' on the part of the Hindu Sabhas immediately allowed the League to suggest that there was a campaign afoot to subject the Muslims of the province to the Congress.[73] At a Muslim League meeting in Lucknow, the general secretary of the Provincial League, Rizwan Ullah, claimed that the recent riots in different parts of the province were actually an attempt to overawe the Muslims of UP generally.[74] This was an old political tactic, followed since 1938, but the political effect in terms of Congress's Muslim support was substantially greater by the 1940s. Muslim mass contacts was a dead letter: the seventh session of the Muslim Student's Federation held at Aligarh passed resolutions heavily criticising the mass contacts movement as a 'threat to Muslim interests'. Two years of accusations against the Congress ministry had significantly affected Congress's morale and prestige and now the League was reaping its reward. With the lure of power in a central government and the stories of Hindu repression, the League could begin to sever the Congress tie of the Ahrars and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema. In some cases the psychological effects of communal riots were extremely damaging to Congress's potential Muslim support. For the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, as it began to move away from the Congress in August 1941, communal riots were given as a good reason for closer ties between different groups of Muslims in the province. By 1944 the Muslim League was using communal riots to increase its popularity in Basti district. Ismail Khan and Khaliquzzaman visited the district in January 1944, touring the scenes of a Hindu–Muslim riot.[75]

their celebrations, especially when their processions pass a mosque.' Memoirs of Patrick Biggie, 26 September 1941, SAS.

73 The pro-League newspapers *Haq, Hamdam* and *Jiddat* repeatedly echoed the fears of Hindu domination. Fortnightly Report for the second half of July 1945, 4 August 1945, Frampton Papers SAS. At a Hindu Sabha conference on 25 February, Khaparde had stressed the importance of Hindu militarisation and was supported by a Congressman, Kothekar. *Leader* (Allahabad), 6 March 1941.

74 *Al-Hilal*, 16 June 1941 (translated for the author), AICC file 47/1940 NMML.

75 APS 28 January 1944.

The political connections being made by Congress's potential Muslim support, between communal conflict and accusations that a 'Hindu Raj' would suppress Muslim rights, were also created by Congress's own continued use of a religious idiom. This continued use of religion is striking given the vociferous campaigns for Muslim mass contacts and the attempts to popularise Hindu–Muslim unity and party discipline.[76] Even in 1945, in some districts of UP Congress used the Holi festival to promote 'harijan uplift and communal harmony'. This might have been insignificant had not the RSS also been using Holi for its own propaganda, especially in Budaun district. Consequently, Muzzafarnagar and Sitapur districts both witnessed Hindu–Muslim clashes during Holi in 1945.[77]

With the approach of the general elections at the end of 1945, the new political significance of Hindu–Muslim conflict was fully illustrated. At the end of September 1945, in connection with electioneering propaganda, there were communal clashes in Allahabad and Kanpur. In Bijnor scuffles between Nationalist Muslims and Muslim League supporters eventually developed into a characteristic Hindu–Muslim clash. Lucknow and Sitapur witnessed similar scenes.[78] In Sultanpur, the use of Congress electioneering slogans in Dasehra processions led to the pelting of stones by Muslim bystanders. At a meeting of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema in Meerut, which opposed the Pakistan scheme, Muslim League volunteers deliberately created a disturbance.[79] In Allahabad in December, leading up to the Provincial Assembly elections, Leaguers carried an enormous map of Pakistan in a Mohurram procession. The League's use of communal excitement and conflict during the elections was effective: despite a donation from the Congress to the All-India Muslim Parliamentary Board of Rs.35,000 for the Central Assembly election, the initial Muslim response to Congress was poor. In November, Kidwai was given Rs.50,000 by the UPPCC to be spent on propaganda for Nationalist Muslims, but in Bareilly the Muslim League was able to build up enough physical and emotional support to throw brickbats at a meeting addressed by Madni. The Muslim League won all the UP Muslim seats in the Central Assembly.[80]

By 1946 political observers were finding it difficult to distinguish between sectarian conflict along religious lines and purely political conflicts. In this scenario, local branches of the Khaksars threw in their

76 'Hindu Muslim Milap', June 1937, AICC Papers, file 48–49/1937 NMML.
77 *Leader* (Allahabad), 2 March 1945.
78 Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, p. 88; APS 5 October 1945.
79 Fortnightly Report for the first half of September 1945, 19 September 1945, Frampton Papers SAS.
80 APS 19 October, 9 November, 23 November 1945.

lot with whichever election army seemed more convincing.[81] In Kanpur they lined up with the Nationalist Muslims. In Jhansi they backed the Muslim League. Across the province the election provoked politico-religious fights amongst university students in which Nationalist Muslims were caught in a bitter communal trap. A habit developed for answering student roll-calls with the phrases 'Jai Hind' or 'Pakistan'. The students of Aligarh were particularly vociferous in their spreading of League propaganda, and Jinnah described them as 'the arsenal of Muslim India'.[82] In January, Lucknow Christian College students came to blows over the tying of a League flag to a Congress flag-post.[83] Conflict between competing voting blocs seemed to be as fierce as the traditional Hindu–Muslim fights: in February in Kanpur, members of the Depressed Class Federation (Ambedkar group) threw stones at members of the Depressed Class League who were marching in a Congress procession.[84]

Violence described by observers as 'communal' was not always motivated by religious controversy. Yet the rhetoric and imagery surrounding these fights was still filled with the racism or bigotry of community consciousness. It was this infusion of political rivalry with religious significance that also helped to account for the fluidity of different Muslim groups between the Congress and the Muslim League. The support for a candidate from a particular political group frequently involved party warfare. Since electors identified their interests according to religious community, political ideology and factional ties it was easy for groups to shift allegiance between the two parties of Congress and Muslim League. The Khaksars and Ahrars in Mathura district achieved this in the aftermath of an election communal riot. At the last moment before the election the two groups changed their political allegiance from Congress to Muslim League. The League tactic of using communal conflict to attempt to strengthen communal over other ideological ties had worked. The experience of the 1945–6 elections provided some kind of proof.[85]

[81] Extract from South East Asia Command and Indian Command Weekly Security Intelligence Summary no. 178, 30 March 1945, War Office, Military Intelligence Bureau WO208/775 PRO. Whilst this report highlighted the militant Islamic nature of the Khaksars, as well as their political activity, it was claimed that in certain areas, there was 'no real love lost between Khaksars and Muslim League'.

[82] Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, pp. 108–15.

[83] Fortnightly Report for the second half of January 1946, 5 February 1946, Frampton Papers SAS. There were also 'flag battles' between the Muslim League and the Ahrars in Aminabad, Lucknow. *Leader* (Allahabad) 1, 2 February 1946.

[84] *Leader* (Allahabad), 20 February 1946.

[85] All the Muslim seats in the elections to the central legislative assembly were won by League candidates, and won the party nearly 75 per cent of the total Muslim vote cast in elections to provincial assemblies, with relatively greater support in Muslim minority provinces like UP. Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 171–2.

The ambiguous communal angle to the elections was revealed on the Hindu side too: at the Holi following the Provincial Assembly elections in Bijnor, Unao and Kanpur districts, the singing of anti-Pakistan songs nearly led to further Hindu–Muslim rioting.[86]

From April 1946 communal tension between Hindus and Muslims increased. At the beginning of the month there were clashes in Moradabad, Pilibhit, Mathura and Lucknow. A serious riot between followers of the Muslim League and the RSS had also occurred in Etah on 31 March.[87] The increased violence probably reflected both speculation about affairs on the all-India stage and the possibility of the formation of a coalition government including both the Congress and the Muslim League. It also accompanied a sudden increase in League communal extremism. On Pakistan Day, on 23 March, speakers on behalf of the Muslim League declared that Pakistan should be seen as a matter of life and death for all Muslims throughout India.[88] A notice in Aligarh called for armed revolution. At a Muslim League meeting in Banaras, Syed Mohammed claimed that, if necessary, Pakistan would be achieved 'by the sword'. Aggressive rhetoric was mirrored by an intensification of volunteer activity and a tendency for organisations to plan for war. Addressing the Aligarh RSS, Asutosh Lahiri told members to prepare themselves for battle against the Muslims and the British. The Muslim League Volunteer Corps also stepped up its activity. Members were called to fight for Pakistan and references were drawn from the Koran. One Professor Halim was put in charge of a defence committee to prevent a 'sudden attack on Muslims' after the Aligarh riots. Indeed, Pakistan had become an 'idea' which called for a violent solution, either in support or opposition. At Jhansi, for example, Bashir Ahmad Chaturvedi appealed to scheduled castes to prepare themselves for battle over Pakistan.[89]

The interpretation of Hindu–Muslim conflict in 1946 in terms of a 'communalism' that dated from the 1920s is made very difficult by this background of incipient mass violence. The lining-up of communities over a particular religious question is not an explanation for this militarism and religiously inspired factionalism. Where volunteer organisations were involved in conflicts, there was a dualism in the activity of participants. Military-style organisations were developed on the basis of very large communal groupings. For example, the Muslim League

86 APS 15 March, 22 March 1946.
87 Fortnightly Report for the first half of April 1946, 22 April 1946, Frampton Papers SAS.
88 *Hindustan Times* (Delhi), 27 March 1946.
89 APS 12, 19 April 1946; Fortnightly Report for the first half of April 1946, 22 April 1946, Frampton Papers SAS. A large crowd of 2,000 attended the RSS rally at Ghaziabad in opposition to Pakistan.

Defence Committee of Aligarh based its entire programme on speculation about the threat of Hindu aggression.[90] But volunteers were also mobilised by organisations with more specific motivations. Organisations like the Khaksars and the Azad Hind Dal seemed to operate according to their own, often localized, agendas in which affiliation to community, or even to a political party like the Congress, was not a foregone conclusion.[91] The existence of such a diversity of localised and fractured volunteer bodies, militarised but also fluctuating in their fortunes, made it highly unlikely that peace between the two communities could be achieved. It was no longer a matter of 'a communal problem' that could be checked by the assumptions about religion used to regulate religious festivals. The 'precedents and customs' no longer applied. Volunteer bodies with fluid political motivations could throw in their lot with their own religious community at will, making it essential for highly communal groups to assert their religious identity in an attempt to win over waverers.

As the year 1946 progressed, Hindu–Muslim riots increased in number and intensity. On 23 and 24 May riots occurred in Bareilly and Allahabad, creating a widespread sensation throughout the province. The Allahabad City Congress Committee alleged police excesses. By the beginning of June there were clashes in Meerut, Aligarh, Azamgarh and Bijnor districts. As communal violence increased, so the number and activity of communal organisations proliferated. In June, Congressmen in Aligarh and Pilibhit were reportedly involved in the organisation of local RSS cadres. The Muslim National Guards increased their activity in Aligarh, Muzaffarnagar and Budaun.[92] Meanwhile, Hindu–Muslim clashes spread to Agra, Lucknow, Muzaffarnagar and Shahjahanpur.[93] In July, in Jaunpur, a 'Binwat Association' was formed with an initial membership of twenty-five Sunni youths, with the explicit object of opposing the RSS. In Lucknow the Muslim League organised the opening of akharas in every mohalla. Yet in most localities the Congress continued to be the main target of League communal recriminations.[94]

[90] Hasan, *Legacy of a Divided Nation*, p. 88. In the last section it was seen that calls for 'Hindu' defence could also elicit a widespread popular response at mass meetings.

[91] Extract from South East Asia Command and Indian Command Weekly Security Intelligence Summary no. 178, 30 March 1945, War Office, Military Intelligence Bureau WO208/775 PRO; 'Report covering the first half of 1939', L/PJ/8/678 IOR.

[92] Fortnightly Report for the second half of June 1946, 12 July 1946; the first half of July 1946, 22 July 1946, Frampton Papers SAS.

[93] *Aj* (Banaras), 21 June 1946.

[94] For example, in Muzzafarnagar during the Muslim League 'Direct Action Day' on 16 August a leaflet was printed accusing the Congress government of closing a local mosque and preventing prayers. In reality the dispute had little to do with mainstream

With the news of rioting in Calcutta between 16 and 20 August 1946, the state of high tension bordered on civil war. The League's 'Direct Action Day', which Jinnah had stressed should remain as peaceful an affair as possible to strengthen the League's bargaining hand at an all-India level, became an occasion for carnage.[95] The response to the violence of Calcutta in UP reinforced the gradual slide into religiously motivated militarisation. On 18 August the RSS organised a monster rally in Aligarh. In Allahabad, Mufti Fakhrul Islam and Mukhtar Zaman came out to claim that they would be ready to draw daggers for Pakistan. A professor of Aligarh University, Dr Abdullah Nasar, stated that the Muslims of UP could easily face 24 crores of Hindus. At Farrukabad and Lucknow there were calls to civil war. At Muzzafarnagar, Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani made a speech describing how all Muslims were born 'mujahid' and that if they were killed in action they became 'shahid' (martyrs). Whatever the measured, constitutional style of the Pakistan demand at an all-India level, events in UP helped to turn the calls of the League into an excuse for civil unrest and a recipe for communal hatred. In this atmosphere it was difficult for 'respected' Congressmen not to be drawn into the call for arms. At Etawah on 30 August, for example, M. L. Gautam called on youths to prepare themselves 'for the next armed struggle'.[96]

With the formation of the Coalition ministry on 2 September, the violence in UP appeared to ebb, but military-style organisations based on religious community continued to proliferate. In Bulandshahr the district Muslim League encouraged akharas to counteract the RSS. In Kanpur, Sir Padam Singhania reportedly spent Rs.60,000 for the training of volunteers in the event of war.[97] At Tandla forty Arya Samaj volunteers were regularly trained in lathi fighting in the local temple. Lucknow, Kanpur, Fatehpur and Allahabad all saw an increase in the activities of the Muslim National Guards. RSS activity was stepped up throughout UP. In Kanpur there were daily meetings of 350 volunteers. Etah and Gorakhpur recorded meetings of 500 and 1,000 each. At Mathura the local RSS deliberately organised meetings in Muslim residential areas. In

politics, and concerned land disputed by the Dhunia and Kahar communities. Here was an example of how a localised, non-religious dispute could assume both communal and religious proportions. APS 9 August 1946.

95 Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 215–17. 'The inevitable increase in communal tension made it all the more difficult for the League and the Congress to come to terms at an All-India level.'

96 APS 23, 30 August 1946. Mohan Lal Gautam, an Aligarh Brahman, was close to the Tandon group in Congress after Independence, acting as general secretary of the Congress when Tandon was president. Brass, *Factional Politics in an Indian State*, pp. 43–5.

97 *The Citizen Weekly* (Kanpur), 4 September 1946.

Allahabad there was a move, prompted by the RSS, to set up mohalla protection schemes called 'Jamghat Committees'.[98]

In this continued state of tension 'depressed-class' organisations became the target of religious propaganda. Depressed classes had continued to be a part of Congress's agenda right into the 1940s.[99] Yet this too led to an enhancement of antagonism between Congress and League. In Saharanpur, there had been on-going tension between Chamars on the one hand and Rajputs, Gujars and Jats who supported the Congress on the other.[100] At Farrukabad, League leaders addressed a meeting of scheduled castes, claiming that 'they were all sailing in the same boat'. In Bareilly the Muslim League deliberately set out to enter depressed-class mohallas to persuade them to join. In Kheri and Lucknow the League–Congress struggle to win the hearts of the scheduled castes led to violent conflicts on 25 September. Depressed-class groups saw the religious as well as the political implications of any defiance of the Congress: at Agra, audiences were urged to show their displeasure by boycotting Ramlila, leading to province-wide violence during Dasehra. In Agra, again, those opposing the Pakistan demand used Ramlila. A crowd of 4,000, which included the socialist leader Jai Prakash Narain, shouted anti-Pakistan slogans. In the main cities of UP the Ambedkarites among the depressed-class associations, whilst not necessarily gaining the upper hand politically, were certainly the most vocal. In Kanpur it was stated that no scheduled-caste movement would be launched in provinces where the Muslim League was in power. Throughout October the Muslim League continued to fête scheduled-caste meetings in Kheri, Kanpur, Farrukabad, Lucknow and Mainpuri.[101]

Between 6 and 11 November the province was shaken by a Hindu–Muslim riot which competed with Calcutta in its carnage. Muslims from Shahjahanpur and Dasha attacked a group of pilgrims returning from the Garmuktesar fair, where there had been a previous slaughter of Muslims. A Hindu retaliation followed between 9 and 11 November, with attacks on the Muslim villages of Harsaon and Indergarhi. Stray attacks continued up until 14 November. According to a report of the secretary

[98] APS 13 September 1946.

[99] The Congress was involved in controversy in Dehra Dun, when a 'harijan' marriage procession, organised by Congressmen, was stopped by caste Hindus – *Leader* (Allahabad), 11 March 1941. The Muslim League were also keen to court the 'depressed classes'. In March 1941, Jinnah sought a political accommodation with Ambedkar at Jalagaon – *Leader* (Allahabad), 28 March 1941.

[100] Fortnightly Report for the first half of July 1946, 22 July 1946, Frampton Papers SAS.

[101] APS 13, 20 September; 18 October 1946.

of the UPPCC, there were 416 deaths, 118 serious injuries and over 500 arrests.[102] The events of the initial riot at the fair itself indicated the extent to which the Congress had now come to be associated with Hindu communal extremism in the minds of parties concerned with sectarian conflict. Mridula Sarabhai, a witness of the riot, described how, during the Garmuktesar fair, no Hindu religious slogans were chanted. Instead, Congress slogans and flags served to build up 'the good will and confidence of the pilgrims'. However, Sarabhai commented that: 'this technique was also responsible for aggravating the estrangement of the Muslims from the Congress. The attitude of the mass pilgrims towards these people was of reverence that is usually experienced by Congressmen when they go to the villages.' Although Sarabhai obviously considered that the use of Congress propaganda was innocent on the part of Congressmen themselves, it was believed that nationalist slogans were actually exploited by those interested in violence: 'Seeing our car with the national flag, Congress slogans were raised. Interrogating the person who raised the slogans, we found him to be a rabid communalist.' Sarabhai's explanation of this phenomenon was revealing if not entirely satisfying: 'Among the Hindus also there is a well-organised anti-Congress and anti-national group sailing under the name of the Congress.'[103]

A Muslim witness (although another Congress sympathiser) corroborated Sarabhai's story. Major General Shah Nawaz Khan[104] believed that the 'communalists' who incited the violence were probably members of the RSS, who deliberately aimed to discredit the Congress. However, Nawaz Khan added information at the end which made the role of the Congress appear to have been more ambiguous: 'They were carrying Congress flags and shouting Congress slogans, with the result that the local inhabitants thought that the Congress was at the back of it all. In some places, I regret to say, local Congressmen assisted them.'[105] The 'Hindu communalist' was naturally able to invoke the old Congress slogans and to brandish the national flag whilst entering into conflicts with Muslims. This fact alone demonstrated the extent to which the Congress organisation in UP, at different times, had been directly associated with

[102] Report of Phool Singh, AICC file CL-10/1946-7 NMML.
[103] Statement of Mridula Sarabhai, secretary of All-India Congress Committee, AICC file 20/1946 NMML.
[104] Shah Nawaz Khan was involved in the organisation of the Azad Hind Volunteer Corps. He claimed that the atrocities exceeded those committed by the Japanese in their three years of occupation of East Asia. Statement of Major General Shah Nawaz Khan, AICC file 20/1946 NMML.
[105] *Ibid.*

extreme Hindu nationalism.[106] In more obvious ways the riot could not have been more damaging to the prestige of the Congress throughout India: an All-India Congress session had been planned for 23 November in Meerut.[107]

Because of the timing of the 'Meerut disturbances', the Congress organisation as a whole was forced to take the riot seriously. Congressmen and women quickly realised the extent to which their party had been placed in an almost impossible position by the years of accumulated Hindu–Muslim violence. Mridula Sarabhai noted how even the setting-up of a peace committee by the Congress would strengthen the party's 'all-Hindu' image:

> Due to government initiative peace committees are started. In a province like Gujarat where there is no other organized party amongst the Hindus except the Congress, the membership of the peace committee boils down to Hindu Congressmen and Muslim League and a few representatives from commercial communities. So indirectly on the peace committee Congress representatives mean only Hindus and appearance is given that Congress is one of the aggressive parties. This is reducing the Congress to become a communal organization which is harmful.[108]

There was also an appreciation of ways in which nationalist enthusiasm generated by the Congress could feed into other latent channels of political aggression. Ironically, Sarabhai and Shah Nawaz had recognised the degree to which Congress-led enthusiasm could run out of control through unsupervised volunteer organisations. Before the Meerut disturbances, Sarabhai had seen how disorganised volunteer activity in UP had contributed to the escalation of violence in politics, often along 'communal' lines. The result was a wariness of volunteer organisations which had not been set up strictly under the auspices of Congress Committees – 'These will completely weaken our organisation if encouraged.' However, of more relevance were the passions and emotions which Sarabhai believed volunteer activity was harnessing:

> It is absolutely necessary to harness this countryside patriotic urge . . . It is feared, unless it is immediately undertaken, these energies may find an outlet in wrong channels, which would rather hinder our struggle rather than assist it.[109]

Here was another argument which supports the theory that the personnel and activities of volunteer bodies in UP may well have fluctuated

106 Fortnightly Report for the first half of November 1946, 25 November 1946, Frampton Papers SAS. This report stated that the riots were provoked by 'a well organized Hindu crowd'.

107 Note on the recent disturbances, AICC file G-13/1946 NMML.

108 *Ibid.*

109 Note on the Azad Hind Volunteer Corps, *ibid.*

between Congress and communal organisations. It has already been seen how Congressmen in various districts involved themselves with the RSS and the Mahabir Dals. There is also plenty of evidence that the actual nature of volunteer activity outwardly could have confused organisations in the minds of observers.[110] The tendency of Congress patriotism to degenerate into religious nationalism was generated by the content of Congress rhetoric: one of the rules of conduct for the Hindustani Seva Dal suggested in an issue of *Harijan* in 1946 included these words: 'He should recite Ramanam ceaselessly in his heart and persuade others who believe to do likewise.' Within the pledges of the Hindustani Seva Dal was another revealing aspect, which hardly befitted the ideals of secular nationalism: 'I am prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault, or even death for the sake of my religion and my country without resentment.'[111] It is noteworthy that religion was considered to be the means through which the strength of patriotism could be accessed, controlled and directed. Assaulted daily by arguments concerning religious community, the propensity for even the Hindustani Seva Dal to become involved in Hindu–Muslim antagonism is hardly surprising.

The correspondence surrounding the 'Meerut disturbances' reflected this fine line between 'secular' patriotic enthusiasm and the passion of religious extremism. A common observation was that the Congress organisation, willingly or unwillingly, had been forced into the position of the protector of Hindu interests. This had come about as a result of League propaganda, but was also felt to be a 'natural' development by some right-wing UP Congressmen.[112] Out of these opinions and ideas came plans for the proportional division of the nation's spoils between the two communities to lessen the chances of a civil war. In the midst of this discussion up to May 1946, Purushottam Das Tandon made a controversial speech at Jhansi, confirming his own shift away from Gandhian non-violence towards a more militaristic and communal solution to India's troubles.[113] One anonymous letter came close to the position of Tandon, by criticising the Congress for 'considering every Hindu organisation as communal, which want to challenge Congress – a wrong conception (no Hindu organisation has ever stood in the way of national advancement – A Hindu is by nature a nationalist)'. Further on, the letter

[110] Fortnightly Report for the first half of November 1945, 20 November 1945, Frampton Papers SAS. There were comments here that the closeness of Congress and Hindu Mahasabha institutions in UP districts made the two organisations almost indistinguishable during elections.
[111] National Volunteer Corps, Shah Nawaz Khan, AICC file G-13/1946 NMML.
[112] Article by Jwala Prasad Singhal, 11 June 1947, AICC file CL-10/1946–7 NMML.
[113] *Abhyudaya* (Allahabad), 6 June 1947.

became more revealing of the dissatisfied Congress element: 'The young man of today does not believe in non-violence. He is not a communalist. He is a nationalist. He thinks it to be his right to protect his religion and culture.' Youths of 'high Hindu culture' were 'sons of Guru Chanakya, Rana Pratap, Lord Krishna, Guru Govind Singh, Sir Chottu Ram and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan'.[114] Another letter to the UPPCC complained that the whole executive and administrative machinery was being 'monopolised by Muslims'. The riots at Aligarh, Meerut, Jaunpur, Khurja and Banaras proved how it was necessary that 'a strong Hindu' should be controlling the Home Minister portfolio and that Hindus should be supplied with licences for the keeping of arms.[115]

The 1940s in UP witnessed a crucial shift in the nature and the meaning of conflict between religious communities. As the elections of 1945–6 approached, the political manipulation of Hindu–Muslim conflict came into its own. The Muslim League carried out tours of districts affected by communal violence and made repeated reference to riots as examples of 'Hindu tyranny'. Although the UP Congress did not manipulate Hindu–Muslim violence in this fashion, it was forced into the position of side-taking and face-saving. Kanpur Congressmen were associated with the Hindu Sabha in the aftermath of the 1939 riot. Similarly, in 1946, Sarabhai noted how 'peace committees' concerned with the settling of Hindu–Muslim riots placed Congressmen in the Hindu communal court. Other parties had manipulated communal tension in the past. This had been a clear method of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1926. Congress was implicated too: the manner in which the Congress dealt with the political fallout of the Shia–Sunni trouble in Lucknow in 1937[116] illustrated that it was no stranger to the advantages to be made from sectarian divisions in UP.

Hindu–Muslim conflict had changed in a more radical sense. Political culture in UP had moved away from the idealism of satyagraha. This was the result of a global war situation, as well as the fracturing of the Congress and its satellite organisations, challenging the authority of the old Gandhian ahimsa. In the mid-1940s the proliferation of

[114] Anonymous letter, AICC file CL-10/1946–7 NMML. The Hindu Sabhas and Arya Samaj had reportedly become much more critical of Congress on similar grounds – a situation provoked by the apparent concessions of the Congress to the Muslim League at the centre. Fortnightly Report for the first half of November 1946, 25 November 1946, Frampton Papers SAS.

[115] Anonymous letter, AICC file CL-10/1946–7 NMML.

[116] See chapter 6, pp. 213–18.

volunteer organisations, with their fluctuating loyalties to both League and Congress, added a further dimension to the shift in communal conflict. Power over military resources became a new consideration. Conflict between different religious communities was no longer unambiguously 'communal' in nature. The increasing rivalry between volunteer organisations in different contexts could reflect changes in party politics, or the need to control military and human resources as much as religious antagonism. The Khaksars spearheaded prayer meetings, but supported both Congress and Muslim League in different parts of the province. Organisations like the Hindustan Sewa Dal, although usually associated strictly with Congress secularism, could sometimes be implicated in acts of 'Hindu communalism', as during the Meerut disturbances. Likewise the Mahabir Dals, symbolic of Hindu aggression, were often involved in the organisation of Congress propaganda. Political identity appeared, through the complicated web of volunteer activity, to be made up of strands of different loyalties which bound each other together. Different loyalties took precedence at different moments. Whilst religion continued to be used in nationalist and patriotic sentiment, community provided the strongest strand.

An analysis of the methods used to maintain discipline, cohesion and loyalty within volunteer and political movements supports this. The pledges of the Hindustani Sewa Dal contained declarations concerning religion, through which the necessary patriotism could be achieved. Congress propagandists continued to use religious festivals for purposes of popular support in the mid-1940s. In some districts Congressmen found themselves competing with organisations like the RSS during Holi and Dasehra. In the context of the religious rhetoric used by Congressmen during civil disobedience in 1930 and 1931, this fact might appear unremarkable. However, after the attempts of Ashraf to popularise Muslim mass contacts from 1937 and the revelations of damaging links between Congressmen and communal organisations, the continued reliance on religion is remarkable. On the one hand, the amorphous character of the Congress organisation in UP made it difficult to maintain the secular standards dictated at provincial headquarters. On the other, the Muslim League used unambiguously communal methods that eventually forced Congressmen to adopt a 'Hindu' stance.

All three sections of this chapter have suggested that popular politics could generate their own momentum in terms of religious conflict, and were not simply parallel to political negotiations at the centre. This helps to explain the fluctuating Muslim support for Congress in the shape of

the Majlis-i-Ahrar, against a backdrop of mass meetings over Pakistan as well as the on-going ideological attachment of Congress and Hindu Mahasabha. Finally the momentum of communal conflict and the militarisation of popular politics had its own spoiling effect on the efforts of Jinnah and Nehru to reach a compromise at the centre.

8 Conclusion

This book has set out to investigate how an organisation that aimed to adopt secularism came to be permeated with languages of Hindu nationalism. This question has been approached by asking a secondary question: how can we explain the division of political life along the lines of religious community in the crucial province of UP, and what part did this process play in the eventual division of the subcontinent? Both questions have been examined from the point of view of institutional connections between the Congress at different levels and parties of Hindu communal organisations such as the Hindu Mahasabha and Arya Samaj. The links of Congressmen to institutional Hindu nationalism – the Hindu Sabhas, the Arya Samaj and the RSS – were complex and regionally diverse.[1] But does the evidence of those linkages provide a sufficient explanation for Muslim alienation from the Congress and the persistent use of a Hindu idiom within mainstream nationalism? After all, the institutions of Hindu communal organisation were in themselves relatively powerless both in elections and in the crucial multiparty negotiations of the 1930s and 1940s. Might there not be another level, at which the ideological importance of these institutions did have an impact not only on Congress as an institution, but also on the nature of ideology and political language with which UP Congressmen engaged?

There has of course been a great deal of interest recently in 'Hindu nationalist' ideologies and motifs, in an attempt to provide historical explanations for the rise of contemporary Hindutva in the subcontinent. Again, most of this work has looked at the institutions of Hindu

[1] Pandey, *The Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, and Hasan, 'The Muslim Mass Contacts Campaign', have both mentioned the ways in which the UP Congress's relationship with institutions like the Hindu Sabhas inhibited its mobilisation. But these institutional connections were strong only in certain localities. For example, a strong Congress–Arya Samaj link existed in western UP especially Saharanpur district. Kanpur and Banaras maintained Congress–Hindu Sabha associations well into the 1930s.

nationalism.[2] A central concern has been the way in which the Congress, as the predominant vehicle of 'secular nationalism' in India, has attempted to contest or accommodate the forces of Hindu nationalist revival and Hindutva.[3] But, by shifting the question away from a study that looks at Hindu nationalism as a static ideology attached to specific institutions, it is possible to investigate how the ideas and political languages of these institutions operated within the Congress itself. Instead of working on the assumption that the Congress unambiguously spelled the failure of 'secularism', this line of questioning opens up new possibilities for research into the nature of Hindu nationalism itself. It hopefully also presents a new way of looking at how ideologies and political languages make a difference within broad political and historical processes.

The question remains as to why the Congress was a party to these overlapping political languages, which could be interpreted in ways that worked against its broader political agendas. It is clear that, in its struggle to present itself as a national institution, the Congress as a movement became an open house for a whole range of political actors and ideologies. These diverse interests served the party during elections and agitations and were tolerated precisely because the colonial state was repeatedly looking for the atomisation of Indian society. In some respects an institution like the Congress, and in a context such as UP, was both able and obliged to promote a political culture that tolerated such a cross-section of ideologies. The history of volunteer movements that operated in the name of Congress in the 1930s and 1940s (described in chapter 4) illustrated how this was the case. In order to understand why a 'Hindu' or a communal meaning could be derived from this apparent diversity, it is necessary to look at the processes whereby tolerance, diversity, cosmopolitanism, inclusiveness, even secularism were associated with Hinduism and a sense of the 'Hindu' in Congress discourses.

Chapter 2 demonstrated how Congress's employment of a Hindu idiom was both an inheritance of early twentieth-century extremism and of practical and ideological advantage during civil disobedience in 1930 and 1931. Nationalists used religious rhetoric and activity to create popular representations of the nation, which contained a mixture of ideas and languages engaging with a range of social groups. Notions of 'pollution' in connection with cow products and derived from earlier ideas

[2] The clearest examples of this historiography are Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*, and Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, eds., *The BJP and the Compulsion of Politics in India* (Delhi, 1998).

[3] See, for example, Sumantra Bose, '"Hindu Nationalism" and the Crisis of the Indian State: A Theoretical Perspective', in Sumantra Bose and Ayesha Jalal, eds., *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India* (Delhi, 1997), pp. 104–64.

of 'swadeshi', for example, were combined with new ideas of a civic religion surrounding Congress's immediate predicament in the early 1930s. This predicament in many instances built upon the deliberate symbol-making surrounding the timing of civil disobedience and its mobilisation through popular religious festivals. The mixture of political languages, which came about through this simultaneous engagement with different sets of symbols, meant that the character of Congress mobilisation at local levels could, in a practical sense, take place in a range of religio-political environments. This created a looseness in interpretations of Congress secularism, since the range of religious environments and contexts exploited also encouraged the participation of political agents with more explicitly communal agendas. The meaning of Congress civil disobedience in the towns and districts of UP consequently went beyond the intentions and utterances of provincial and national leaders.

In the activities of Congressmen during festivals, and in connection with campaigns such as cow protection, there were, then, practical as well as ideological dimensions to civil disobedience. The practical considerations also served to transform the nature of ideologies and political languages. In the building of a mass movement, religion helped to provide the necessary framework, space, discipline and mobilisation, and in the process the political meaning of 'Hinduism' was redefined as an idea. In varied contexts the Hindu people were represented as being conterminous with the Indian nation. The techniques used to describe Hinduism and the nation were partly inherited from late nineteenth-century Hindu revivalism. But there were also new, populist elements, combining wide definitions of Hindu spiritualism with ascetic discipline. Hinduism was considered to be a culture as well as a religion. Its philosophy and history, as discussions of the late nineteenth century had claimed, were presented and reconfigured in terms of an 'original' national community. In this building of a sense of the Hindu nation, religious diversity was sacrificed for a rhetoric that emphasised the essentially homogeneous and 'pure' elements of a cultural tradition. Strangely, this was often achieved by imbuing the Hindu nation with essential values and characteristics that included toleration and absorbency – values more commonly associated with diversity and difference. Consequently the Hindu nation could be all things to all manner of nationalists, but it also provided a set of social and moral mores by which outsiders were demonised. In short, it was an ideal medium for the nationalist, providing a means of national consolidation, a national history and mythology, and a sense of cultural purity.

It was because this complex interpretation of Hinduism was so intrinsically a part of Congress nationalism that Congressmen were often blind to connections made between the use of religion in politics and conflict

between different religious communities. In the Congress ministry period of 1937–9 it was the use of Hindu symbolism, alongside an increase in Hindu–Muslim conflict, that allowed the Muslim League to mobilise support on the basis of a Muslim fear of political absorption. Many Congressmen assumed that Hinduism would help the Congress to embrace different religious communities: as Gandhi put it, there was space enough in Hinduism for Christianity and Islam. 'Bande Mataram', the national flag, the Vidya Mandir scheme and the continued use of religious festivals for political purposes – all showed that the effects of the political languages concerned with the 'Hindu' were more deeply entrenched than simply the overlap of personnel between Congress and Hindu Sabhas. Their use and application were taken for granted even though in the towns and districts of UP religious communities had been fighting over similar symbols of political power from early in the century. It was never fully appreciated that the use of religion to stress bald cultural and national difference vis-à-vis the colonial state would also shut out communities disconnected from the most modern, political outpourings of this religious idiom.

The use of religious rhetoric and spaces in Congress nationalism could be seen in theory and in practice, but what evidence was there that these political languages directly estranged non-Hindus? How and why was Hindu nationalism connected to Congress political activity into the mid-1930s? Chapter 3 showed that the Muslim community of UP was far from homogeneous in the early 1930s, and that the Congress could have mobilised it fairly easily, given the nature of Muslim concerns about Congress nationalism. Representatives of Muslim political opinion, from Shaukat Ali to the Shia Political Conference, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and the Khaksars, were largely concerned with the threat of political absorption. Congress's use of Hindu rhetoric allowed Muslims to make accusations of 'Hindu Mahasabhaite' tendencies, and this, combined with the fear that Congressmen would be unaccountable to the Muslim community, partly explained Muslim detachment from civil disobedience. Importantly, Muslim responses to Congress varied from region to region, and related to patterns of landownership or commercial power. But at the same time it is possible to identify themes that repeatedly provided a source of antagonism, particularly in urban environments. The cloth boycotts demonstrated some of the elements of a wide range of UP Muslim concerns. The purity and superiority of khadi was continually related to Hindu ritual purity in the speeches of Congress supporters in towns and districts. Here again we see the operation of an overlapping combination of symbols, some derived from a conscious recognition of the potency of cloth in ritual behaviour in a variety of contexts. Curiously, these symbols might have had significance for Muslim as well as Hindu communities,

despite the fact that foreign cloth was most easily demonised because of its bovine content. Yet these loose intercommunal messages easily translated into a form of Hindu bigotry against the context of commercial competition between Hindus and Muslims and the sense of obligation attached to boycott.

It was not just expected that Muslims would participate in the boycotts. It was felt expedient to compel them to do so. For some Muslims cloth boycott represented in a nutshell all that figures like Shaukat Ali had been claiming – Congress's civil disobedience was partly a demonstration of Hindu power in which the views of other Indian communities would be disregarded. Yet in some towns, such as Bijnor, the Congress had managed to recruit relatively large numbers of Muslims by the late 1930s. It is revealing that the cities with the lowest Congress Muslim membership were those where civil disobedience hartals had been particularly vociferous and responsible for Hindu–Muslim conflict: in Kanpur and Allahabad, by the end of the decade, Congress was clearly fighting a losing battle.[4] Yet the relative success of the Congress amongst Muslims in some towns and districts suggested that this dearth of Muslim support was not inevitable.

Muslim claims that Congress nationalism represented Hindu 'Raj' were borne out by a subtle but possibly more damaging development in 1932 and 1933. Gandhi's 'harijan' fasts in response to the Communal Award effectively destroyed much of the tactical advantage gained by the initial ambiguous Congress attitude to the proposed legislation. By deciding neither to accept nor reject the Award, Congress had left more options open for accommodation with Muslim parties. In some cities this diplomacy was undermined by Gandhi's fasts. The response to Gandhi's actions in UP showed how Hindu idioms could be reconfigured to represent a question of social inequality in terms of the problem of Hindu unity. Such an approach to untouchable uplift also revealed the extent to which Congress's UP support concerned itself with Hindu consolidation or 'sangathan', directed and controlled by high-caste urban elites. The consolidation of the Hindu community was considered to be not only a social duty, but also a national political necessity. The language used to express this crusade was once more reminiscent of both mobilisation methods during civil disobedience and the rhetoric of the Arya Samaj in the mid-1920s.[5] It combined Congress notions of the essential modernity and cosmopolitanism of Hinduism with older ideas of 'community

[4] Kesavan, 'Communal Politics', p. 107.

[5] Madan Mohan Malaviya's speech to the Hindu Mahasabha meeting at Banaras in August 1923 bore some striking resemblances to the arguments made by Gandhi to the Viceroy in opposition to separate electorates for 'depressed classes': Both spoke of the threat of

under threat'. This combination or dialogue of notions was important to the overall Muslim reaction to the idea of a modernised Hindu identity. Moreover, as in the cases of Congress mobilisation through religious festivals, the environment and context of uplift opened the field to political operators with more communal agendas. The enthusiasm surrounding Gandhi's fasts provoked a ranges of responses, from the exclusivism of the RSS to the inclusivism of Gandhi's own following, all meeting at a common point in discussions of Hindu unity.

Hindu nationalist ideologies and languages of politics, then, could cut across an array of different political positions within the Congress. Moreover, it was because political leaders associated with the left (as well as the right) engaged with these languages that they were able to operate as forms of dialogue and heteroglossia. Congressmen on the left were concerned to emphasise the essentially cosmopolitan, catholic and 'tolerant' essence of Hinduism. But, in so doing, they affected the meaning of secular pronouncements by placing these interpretations in tension with more exclusivist notions about Hindu community. The resultant 'Hindu' secularism, because it contained diverse ideological elements, could take on quite a range of meanings. This ambiguity and looseness of meaning allowed pronouncements about religious community (although at first aimed to create a sense of equal regard for all faiths) to be interpreted at certain moments as 'communalism'. Chapters 4 and 5 illustrated the effect of these methods of imagining the nation on individuals and organisations related to the Congress, which ranged from radical social reformers and socialists to conservatives. The Hindu nationalism of the Arya Samaj strongly resembled that of Congressmen in various localities, and was sometimes combined with an ideological attachment to socialism.[6] Algu Rai Shastri provided an example of this approach to Indian nationalism. Mahabir Tyagi represented the more conservative Samajist position. Within the Arya Samaj in UP there were an array of interpretations of the relationship between the Hindu community and the Indian nation, from Congress office holders interested in social reform and the moral asceticism of the Samaj, to more hard-line racial theorists who nevertheless idolised leaders like Gandhi. Contemporary political observers were not always aware of the ideological distinctions within the Arya Samaj, and as a result Congressmen in some localities were easily associated with the shuddhi movement.

national integration if untouchables were not included within the Hindu fold. *Leader* (Allahabad), 28 August 1923. M. K. Gandhi to Samuel Hoare, 11 March 1932 *Leader* (Allahabad), 14 September 1932.

6 Saharanpur district, home of the Kangri Gurukul, Mainpuri, Lucknow, Agra and Meerut were districts of the most intensive Congress–Arya Samaj association.

Hindu nationalism had an important effect on the thinking of more radical and more influential Congress leaders in UP. Purushottam Das Tandon and Sampurnanand were both considered to be on the socialist wing of the UPPCC in the mid-1930s. At the same time, both were supporters of movements which in earlier decades had been associated with Hindu revivalism, for example the advocacy of Sanskritised Hindi. Here we see more clearly how overlapping political languages and symbolic idioms tended to push the meanings of political pronouncements beyond the initial intentions of Congress agents. Sampurnanand publicly expounded the consistency between his socialism and a sense of the Hindu nation. Tandon's activities were less ambivalent. He was a patron of the Arya Samaj, involved himself with Hindu communal volunteer organisations and based his refutation of ahimsa on a Tilakite Hindu revivalism. In 1947 he was responsible for the organisation of the Hind Raksha Dal in cooperation with district Congress Committees, local seva samitis and members of Hindu communal organisations such as the RSS. The significance of this attachment to quasi-religious mobilisation went beyond these two influential leaders within the Congress. Other Congress radicals flirted with Hindu nationalism, especially through the volunteer movements – for example, Balkrishna Sharma and Krishna Dutt Paliwal.

But there was still another level of Hindu mobilisation in which secularists were inadvertently involved in politico-religious expression. It was this unacknowledged level which was perhaps most damaging for the UP Congress. In 1936, whilst on his pre-election tour, Jawaharlal Nehru was fêted by the Arya Samaj, and compared to members of the Hindu pantheon, just as Gandhi had been. This book argues that such a damaging association could not have been possible without the long-term background of Congress involvement with a range of symbolic activities, derived from notions of religious community. And this engagement, in turn, can only be explained by the ease with which notions of the 'Hindu' could accommodate an array of useful mobilisation techniques, bound together in a tense, often paradoxical admixture of symbols and devices. These mixed symbolic messages appeared most clearly at local levels. Yet their existence was tolerated precisely because, at city and provincial levels, leaders such as Sampurnanand and Tandon had legitimised, even applauded, similar forms of hybrid politics.

Muslim political alienation from the UP Congress in the late 1930s and 1940s, and the popularity of the demand for Pakistan in a Muslim minority province, therefore cannot be explained simply by the immediate circumstances of Congress's refusal to enter into a coalition with

the Muslim League in 1937.[7] Neither is it sufficient to consider Muslim alienation as the product of Congress's administrative blunders and its 'harbouring' of local Hindu Sabhaites.[8] The Hindu Mahasabha connection was indeed important, but not just because it required Congressmen in some localities to behave in what would be considered to be a 'communal' way. The success of the League's mobilisation in UP depended on its highlighting of Congress's symbolic relationship with Hindu nationalism. It was not the fact that 'Bande Mataram' was sung at meetings, but the content and meaning of the song, and the method in which it was delivered, which was important. UP Muslims responded to nationalist motifs deeply embedded in Congress mobilisation methods. Whilst anticipation of political power was a key factor by the late 1930s, communal grievances against the Congress could only have been effective if there was some kind of evidence about 'Hindu Raj'. It is impossible therefore to discount the effect of the religious rhetoric used by Congressmen in the early 1930s in this build-up of a multilayered Congress image – an image that was often interpreted by non-Congress groups on the basis of its lowest common denominator.

The tainting of the Congress organisation in this way limited Congress's attempts to manoeuvre between Muslim parties with differing political and religious agendas. The struggle to control and to take advantage of the Shia–Sunni troubles in Lucknow and beyond could be depicted by the League as cynical attempts to divide the Muslim community, limiting the ability of the UP Congress to retain consistent Ahrar and ulema support. Again, Congress had closed off its political options by provoking Muslim communal reaction, highlighting further the apparent inability of a Congress ministry, and a Congress party with local power, to deal with communal conflict. The continued intensity of Hindu–Muslim conflict in the late 1930s and 1940s also helped to reinforce the League accusations that Congress power represented 'Hindu Raj'. This propaganda was given credibility by Congress's past associations with religious mobilisation, and the continued involvement of local Congressmen in religious conflicts. For League propagandists Congress's secular pronouncements at an all-India level could not be taken at face value. The character of politics in town and district in UP, this key province that had been at the forefront of support for Jinnah's remodelled League in 1940, had a profound effect on Congress's all-India bargaining position. This is a history of UP which perhaps still awaits its author.

Chapter 7, however, aimed to remedy a little the relative deficit of research into the consequences of the 'Pakistan' demand in the UP

[7] Hasan, *India's Partition*, pp. 13–14.
[8] Kesavan, 'Communal Politics', pp. 86–100.

provincial context. It also sought to shed light on the contribution of volunteer militarism to the vicious circle of communal politics in UP. Surveys of all-India politics in the lead up to Partition have mostly neglected this process. Muslim responses to the Pakistan demand in UP varied by region and political group. However, the extent of enthusiasm in the largest cities of the province to the 'Pakistan Days' is still surprising, when it is considered that the physical reality of 'Pakistan' would have seemed ambiguous to most Muslims, especially in the context of such a vague Lahore Resolution.[9] Given that the main focus of enthusiasm for Pakistan was in the largest of UP's cities – the very locations of communal conflict in the late 1930s and 1940s – it would not be unreasonable to deduce that the success of Pakistan related to some extent to the demonisation of the Congress as a 'Hindu' organisation. Firstly, the acceleration of Hindu–Muslim confrontation in the mid-1940s was linked to the counter-enthusiasm of the Hindu Mahasabha. Links with the Congress still existed, particularly through the agency of Maheshwar Dayal Seth. Secondly, the build-up of Hindu–Muslim tension was related to the growth in volunteer activity, in which volunteer organisations under Congress control were able to maintain ambiguous relationships with Hindu communal bodies. Consequently a larger part of the Pakistan rhetoric at mass meetings in UP was concerned with criticisms of Congress's 'Hindu bias' rather than with criticism of the Hindu Mahasabha itself.

On the other hand, the momentum of 'communal' conflict appeared to be operating in a very different way by the mid-1940s, when compared to previous decades. This upset the conventional way in which connections were made between the provincial and local spheres of politics, since volunteer organisations shifted in their allegiance to provincial-level political parties. The activities of militant volunteer organisations, in the context of world conflict, radically transformed the nature and meaning of communal violence. Comfortable assumptions about the likelihood of riots around the time of religious festivals no longer held. Instead, violence was more often provoked by a clash between militarised institutions, only loosely representing 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' communal agendas. These institutions fluctuated rapidly in their membership and political persuasion. Their often arbitrary activities and very loose connections with mainstream political institutions and parties made the control and remedy of this violence even more problematic than before.

Attempting to trace historical processes in periods of rapid and intense political change, such as UP in the 1930s and 1940s, is hazardous. It

[9] Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, pp. 241–63.

has been argued that the continual expectations of political change and reform created the widespread social and political uncertainty that might provoke conflict along the lines of religious community.[10] Such an argument provides an alternative to histories that identify a linear unfolding of events in the relationship between the 'primordialism' of religious identity and the modernity of nationalism.[11] There was continuity in the impact of Hindu nationalist ideologies on the UP Congress in the 1930s and 1940s that allows connections to be made between the late nineteenth century and Congress nationalism. On the other hand, the effect of Hindu nationalism on and within the Congress did not develop linearly, but appeared at moments of political crisis and political need, such as during Gandhi's 'harijan' fasts. The Hindu idiom employed by Congressmen did not make the partition of India inevitable or even probable. Rather, it was a paradigm by which some Indians viewed the nation and was often used as a remedy for societal divisions. The inability fully to identify Hindu nationalism itself as a problem was a decisive factor in Congress failures to counter the most crucial division – Muslim separatism.

This book should be clearly differentiated from the argument that 'secularism' was (and still is) intrinsically, perhaps irredeemably, flawed, particularly in the Indian context.[12] It was argued in the opening chapters that Congressmen's ideas about Indian traditions helped them to create a theoretical model for the unified Indian nation. A latent sense of the Hindu nation could exist alongside 'secularism' in the creation of a national political culture. Whilst many of the most ardent secularists were least able to acknowledge the effect of Hindu nationalist ideologies and political languages, this was not necessarily a reflection on the quality of their 'secularism', which obviously could continue to have a powerful and successful effect on political organisation. Yet Hindu nationalist ideologies and a Hindu idiom did affect and contribute to communal conflict in UP in the 1930s and 1940s. Obviously religion, and the traditions and cultures associated with religion, in themselves were never responsible for communal conflict in India. But the ways those traditions were processed, represented and propagated by Congress nationalists (and then the way those syntheses were interpreted by non-Congressmen) were often communally divisive.

[10] C. A. Bayly, 'The Pre-history of "Communalism"?: Religious Conflict in India, 1700–1860', *Modern Asian Studies* 19, 2 (1985), pp. 177–203.

[11] Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*, p. 177. Freitag's stated aim is to identify 'the process by which popular identification with local "community" became transmuted into identification with a larger entity'.

[12] T. N. Madan, 'Secularism in its Place', in T. N. Madan, ed., *Religion in India* (Delhi, 1991), pp. 395–8.

This has a bearing on contemporary debates about the fate of secularism. BJP power in the 1990s and 2000s and its (frequently challenged) assumption of the leadership of Indian nationalism is less surprising if Hindu nationalism is considered as a political language which had particular significance within the UP Congress. Recent studies of the late twentieth-century Congress and state crisis have argued that the socio-economic base for the expansion of Hindu nationalism in the 1980s was very similar to the core north Indian Congress base of support. Upper-caste urban and rural elites in north India decided that a weakened, indecisive Congress could no longer be relied upon to help them maintain social status in the context of caste awards and reservations.[13] A further question is how institutions of the Hindu right were able to take advantage of the political space created by Congress decline, not just from the point of view of direct electoral support, but by suggesting that its own ideologies were not inconsistent with Indian secularism. In other words, how have the Sangh Parivar and institutions of the Hindu right been able to champion themselves as the harbingers of 'true' Indian secularism? With a few small exceptions, the Indian constitution enshrined the principle of a liberal democratic secular state. Although it set up mechanisms and procedures for the reservation of seats for low castes, it rejected separate electorates for religious minorities. Yet the content and meaning of that secularism has always been ambiguous. It was essentially the product of state transformations intersecting with nationalist discourse in the late colonial period of the 1920s to 1940s. The notion of secularism as 'tolerance' – the kind of tolerance found in ideas about pre-modern Indian thought (for many nationalists Hindu thought) – failed to equip the Indian polity with the necessary weapons to counteract fundamentalism and intolerance. There has been a lack of definition of just how the state might adjudicate between religious interests. Added to this is a curious disengagement between Congress notions of the secular and broader processes of secularisation in political culture and civil society.[14] The political languages described above show how secularisation, meaning the shrinking of social and political space occupied by the religious, was circumscribed in a critical period of the Indian state's definition and transformation. The continued significance of a religious idiom in politics from the 1920s to the millennium across institutions, from the BJP to the Congress, provides us with a fundamental, if subtle, clue to the persistence of Hindu nationalism in the politics of India.

[13] See Bose, '"Hindu Nationalism" and the Crisis of the Indian State', pp. 132–42.
[14] For a discussion of this, see Vanaik, *The Furies of Indian Communalism*, pp. 66–7, 115.

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